

The Wilderness Trapper



RAYMOND
THOMPSON

The Wilderness Trapper

A Practical Handbook by a Practical Trapper
with extensive experience in the
wilds of America's Northwest

By
RAYMOND THOMPSON

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THE WILDERNESS TRAPPER

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CHAPTER I

THE CONQUEST OF THE WILDS

HUNDREDS of men with able pens have attempted to describe just how the lure of the wilds affects them. I need not say that any such attempts fail to aptly account for the way one does feel. It is a hard subject to deal with, at best. The average white man has a spark of the primitive in him which, if once burst into flame, will kindle something that only time and bitter experience can quench. And there are some of us who will not learn by experience; however disappointing, we must try the same thing over again. Thus it is with trapping; as I look back over the years I have spent at this game I can see that I might have spared myself a great deal of hardship and disappointment by sticking to a more certain means of livelihood, and today, although rich in experience, I find myself a poor man in terms of dollars and cents.

I can look through the window of our "Little Log Home in the West" and see the first signs of hard, unrelenting winter. Last night before retiring I looked outdoors and saw that a half rain and half snow was falling and realized that before the dawning of a new day the ground would be covered with a white blanket. It did snow and while there is already six inches of it, still there is more and more coming. Out under the great bowed limbs of

spruce and beneath shelter of uprooted tree the innocent snowshoe rabbit will be dreaming the hours away, safe in the knowledge that very few of his mortal enemies, such as the fox, the lynx and the wolf, will be abroad in such weather as this. There was a time when I gloried in the coming of snow to the northland; now it leaves me with a feeling akin to sadness and dread. Sadness for the departed summer, all too short in the wilds, and dread of the long hard season before us. Yet there are times even today when the longing to be out in the wilderness seems just as keen as ever.

Too many men, in writing up their experiences as wilderness or semi-wilderness trappers, are apt to give a wrong impression because they leave out a lot of things that seem of slight importance to them; things which, had they been frank about, would have discouraged hundreds of others from trying trapping as a profession. So many young fellows will start out on a trapping expedition solely because they look forward to having a good trip and the making of a lot of money at the same time. That is exactly the way I had things figured out when I came into this country. I had heard, as thousands of others have heard, that it was quite a common thing for professional trappers to make from two to five thousand dollars a season. All you who have read my trapping articles will recall that I have always tried to discourage belief in such rubbish. There is nothing more than a living to be made at trapping and men who start out with fond hopes of making a "stake" at the game have only themselves to blame for the disappointment they have in store.

"Old stuff!" you say. Yes, it is "old stuff" and like most forms of gossip, has more truth than poetry in it. I'll admit it doesn't do much good to try and discourage people from making fools of themselves, at least it didn't in my own case, but one can at least try to warn his fellows of what he must expect to buck up against later; indeed, this is the object I would like to fulfill in this book, that is, not necessarily to discourage anyone in particular from trapping, but to help them in case they MUST have a try at it!

DON'T TRAP UNLESS YOU HAVE TO

By this, I mean don't let anyone else lure you into the trapping game; if you feel that you must try it, would sooner do it than anything else you know of, then I would say, "Go ahead," but don't be responsible for leading someone into it who can ill afford to take chances. If you are a young fellow in your 'teens I would advise you to get all the schooling you can; remember that in this day of specialized machinery and mechanics it is the highly skilled workman who ALONE can be sure of his job. If you cannot be content with what trapping and hunting you are able to do within a reasonable distance of your home, GET YOUR EDUCATION FIRST, and then spend a year or so trapping, I have no doubt but that it may do you a world of good.

Where we all make our greatest mistakes comes in assuming that any country is ideal for trapping purposes. I have seen and talked with hundreds of men who have had far more experience than I can claim; one and all tell me that I might as well stay right where I am as to look around for a good



OUR CAMP ON THE MURKES RIVER. THE TINKERS AND THE AUTHOR'S WIFE;
LATTER SITTING ON THE GROUND

trapping country. That is perhaps the best advice one could give, yet the fact remains that man will not be content with mere advice—he must try the thing out himself. For that very reason I am considering a number of moves, any one of which will take me a thousand miles or more from my present location. I do not mean by that move to hope of getting into a trapper's paradise; my personal excuse for keeping in touch with the trapping game may be accounted for by my desire to know more and more of the various wild creatures and to write up my experiences in an interesting way. I will say frankly, that as far as trapping itself is concerned, a married man cannot afford to take chances in this or any other country.

WILDERNESS VS. TRAPPING NEAR CIVILIZATION

There is no doubt in my mind but that a good trapper may make more at trapping in the wilderness than near civilized districts—that is natural enough any way you look at it; at the same time one must take into consideration the amount of expense, time and trouble involved in the two forms of trapping, before a fair estimate can be arrived at. The prospective trapper should remember that when he goes into the wilds, he must figure on staying from six months to a year in a place where it is highly improbable that he will be able to procure supplies, no matter how badly needed. If he has a good outfit, is lucky enough to find a fair location he MAY break even. On the other hand if his grub-stake is inadequate, his location no good, he is forced to stick it out until able to leave. I am not seeking to discourage men from trying the wilder-

ness game, but it is best to consider these things beforehand.

I know that an ambitious trapper, trying to catch a few furs that roam within a pasture fence (along with a dozen sneak thieves) is apt to get discouraged and think that he would be happy out in the wilderness where he wouldn't see a single soul! Frankly, I could stand very little of that; yet there is a happy medium in what we call "spot trapping" and I personally know of locations in the western states where a man might do fairly well, especially with a light car or motorcycle with sidecar. The beauty in this form of trapping is that a man is never stuck for territory; that is, if one place doesn't suit him he can pack up and beat it elsewhere. Or, if he finds that trapping will not pay, he can turn to something else, even if he works for his board he is better off than the man who starves, out in the wilds.

In any case I believe a man should at least try the trapping in a civilized country before attempting the other end of the game. Among the numerous communications I have received from prospective trappers, one letter I got from a man on the Atlantic Coast struck me as typical of a class who should NEVER GO TRAPPING. This man knew absolutely nothing of the trapping game, save what he had read, and was of the opinion that he could go most anywhere in the wilds and clean up a couple of thousands in six months. These men I honestly try to discourage—it would be a positive crime to uphold them in their belief. Perhaps it seems mean for one to throw a wet blanket on such plans, yet in my own case, I am obliged to do so for my own

protection if nothing else. That is, should I encourage an inexperienced man in taking a chance involving so much time and expense, he would naturally hold me responsible.

OUTFITTING THE TRAPPER, NO. 1, FOR A CIVILIZED DISTRICT

A first-class outfit for a man trapping in civilized districts, or at least in places where roads are fairly passable, should include an auto or motorcycle with sidecar, as intimated previously. Naturally, not every man who likes to trap, can afford such an investment but in this instance we will consider one who can. For all-round purposes, conditions of road and weather taken into consideration, it is very hard to beat an auto and while a motorcycle and sidecar will prove much cheaper to operate they are somewhat more inconvenient; however it is not my intention to discuss the relative merits of the two kinds of vehicles, both are admirable in the extreme and it depends entirely on the person who intends to use either.

With either of the above the trapper can cover an amount of territory that would make the wilderness trapper's hundred-mile line look like a snowball in the hot place. I believe that a man, in order to make a success of anything, should use every modern convenience he can procure; so why shouldn't a trapper use a car! An auto, in good running order, would be valued at, say, \$300.00. Now at the start, that seems quite a little money to invest in such an undertaking, but one should consider he has his money's worth in the car itself, and counting de-

preciation, should be able to realize on it most any time.

The cost of running a light car, including breaks, depreciation and all incidentals will figure close to eight cents a mile. In making an estimate as to what it would cost the trapper during the single season, in respect to the above, one is more or less forced to trust to guesswork. Personally I believe it would not run over two thousand miles or say, costing \$150.00

Four dozen traps, No. 11½ with the same number of 1's would take care of all the small furbearers such as mink, skunk, coon and muskrat. Four dozen No. 4's would account for any fox, coyotes and other animals of similar size. The total cost of these traps should not exceed \$60.00.

The question of shelter is of paramount importance, various makes and shapes of tents are offered for use in connection with a car; some of these are O. K. and some are useless except for camping during the warmer months. I can recommend the regular wall tent, say a 9x12 with 3-foot wall, as the best rig out. This, when fitted with a small camp stove, will defy some mighty rough weather and is a sort of semi-permanent shelter that may be readily taken down. Such a tent with small sheet iron camp stove should not cost more than twenty dollars. In running a trapline with a car it is generally convenient to use the auto from a central point, often returning there at night. Hence the advisability of using a regular wall tent. The tents that are attached to the top of a car are very inconvenient in that they are incomplete in themselves, and if you want to take a run with the car it is impossible to leave the



TAKING A LOAD OF PRECIOUS GRUB INTO THE WILDERNESS

shelter standing without first procuring poles to hold it up.

In the matter of bedding I believe that one will be wise to buy a good canvas sheet about 6x14 and three good blankets (double). The army blankets in the United States are mighty hard to beat, while the Hudson Bay Company's "point blankets" are old favorites. I have a pair that I have used for seven years now and they show very little sign of wear. While on the subject I may say that it is possible to cut the back of the front seat of a car so that it will hinge, and when lowered makes an ideal bed, for moderate weather, by leveling the space between the front and rear cushions. So, we will say \$30.00 for bedding.

The auto trapper should have two good axes; a medium sized one for carrying with the car and a small one for the belt or pack sack. The larger one comes in mighty handy around camp, when it is necessary to gather a good supply of wood in a short time. Some sort of a skinning knife will come in O. K. here, and although I personally use an ordinary pocket knife for most of the small furbearers, a belt or sheath knife on the order of Marble's Woodcraft will prove useful on larger game and around camp. These above-mentioned weapons should stand one for about \$6.00.

A good pack sack is indispensable, for carrying traps, bait and miscellaneous articles short distances. A good one will cost around \$6.00. In the matter of firearms of course everything depends on the locality one traps in, but for ordinary purposes a .22 repeater and a larger rifle, such as 30-30 or similar should about fill the bill. A belt gun is more

than useless, unless one carries a .22 automatic or even a single shot, for picking off partridges and the like. These two guns will cost about \$60.00.

The matter of clothing is a mighty interesting subject in itself, but as in the case of firearms, all centers on where a man traps, whether in a rainy district or in a cold dry climate. However, there is one thing we are all agreed on, that is most of the clothing should be of wool. Naturally the auto trapper does not need to take a whole clothing store along with him but he should at least try to keep a complete dry change ahead, for the trapper is apt to get wet anytime. Following is a good list:

Two woolen shirts.

Two pairs woolen trousers.

Six pairs medium weight woolen socks. (In the matter of socks one should never stint.)

Two pairs moccasins, with rubbers for damp weather.

One pair gloves and one pair leather mitts.

One woolen overshirt or light mackinaw.

Cap for cold weather and soft felt hat for moderate spells.

The grubstake is something hard to deal with in a matter of this kind; it would be impossible to pack a whole winter's supply in one car and about the only plan one can follow is to keep a week or so ahead, buying whenever needed. If a man is a good cook, in a country where food supplies are reasonably cheap and where he can shoot a little game now and again, it should not cost him above four dollars a week, at the outside.

The auto trapper will need a hunting and trapping license, in most states the two will not cost

over five dollars. Outside of the various articles already mentioned we will need to include some cooking utensils, cups, plates, knives, forks and spoons; a roll of small brass wire, ball of strong cord, needles and thread for mending, also a pair of scissors, a file or two (generally included in car equipment), soap and towels, candles or lantern with oil for light and whatever else may seem necessary. I do not mean to load a car down with a lot of junk but I do believe in taking enough along so that things are fairly comfortable. The above-mentioned miscellaneous articles would cost probably around \$10.00.

SUMMARY OF AUTO TRAPPER'S OUTFIT

Used auto	\$300.00
Cost of running.....	150.00
Traps	60.00
Tent and stove.....	25.00
Bedding	30.00
Axes and skinning knife.....	6.00
Pack sack	6.00
Firearms	60.00
Ammunition	15.00
Clothing	50.00
Food (5 months).....	80.00
Licenses	5.00
Miscellaneous	13.00
<hr/>	
Total.....	\$800.00

Here we have an outfit with which, in the writer's opinion, a hustling trapper could make fairly good money at spot trapping in some of the western states. When I was still in my 'teens I trapped considerably within short distances of my home and, counting the time and the amount of experience I

had, did rather well, so well in fact that I would like to try it again. I can recommend an outing of this sort as especially suited to a married man with a small family.

At the outset an \$800.00 investment in a proposition with more or less chance in it may seem a trifle large but one is not taking near as much risk in the auto trapping game as when taking an extended trip into the heart of the wilderness. To prove this statement I have purposely considered the cost of the above-mentioned equipment, for while it would not seem to have any connection with wilderness trapping, by taking into account the relative costs of the two forms of trapping my readers can then decide which appeals more to them. So, in the following chapter, I will consider the cost of outfitting a man for the wilderness, and then compare the net profits.

CHAPTER II

OUTFITTING THE WILDERNESS TRAPPER

THE question most frequently asked by the uninitiated is just how much it will cost to outfit a trapping expedition into the wilds. This is a big question to say the least; there are outfits and yet more outfits, so that all depends on where one wishes to go, the length of time at hand, means of transportation, etc., etc.

THE QUESTION OF TRANSPORTATION

In the auto trapping game the most expensive item of the whole outfit is the car itself, but one must remember that to get into the wilderness requires a staggering sum also. I find that by far the majority of men interested in wilderness trapping are located in the east and central states. The cost of transportation for one man and one hundred and fifty pounds of luggage and expenses en route, will depend on not only the starting but also the objective point so let us estimate at least a hundred dollars ONE WAY ONLY. It is hard to make or state an amount that will cover the cost of transporting the outfit from the "jumping off place" to the place where one wishes to trap. For instance, if one intends going into the wilderness by the water route, he must figure on building a boat or scow if he does not care to buy a canoe. And even then it is a mighty foolhardy thing for an inexperienced man

to start down an unknown river with no one to guide him. Thus, not only must the cost of the craft be taken into consideration but a guide, costing at least five dollars a day, should be employed. As a fair estimate on the amount required in this connection I believe \$100.00 would not be far wrong, on the average, or say, \$200.00 for total transportation, not counting on the cost of getting back!

Some of the professional trappers I know have pack outfits of from six to ten horses in each, for the sole purpose of getting to and from their trapping grounds, and for use when the snow is not too deep. These outfits, including pack saddles, riding saddles, blankets, etc., are often valued at \$500.00, so one can readily see that I have set a very low estimate on the question of transportation. While I never personally used horses on the trapline I have at present sleigh dogs for which I have been offered prices equivalent to the value of as many "equines" and it is a strange trapper who does not figure his dogs worth at least \$100.00. My big yellow leader, Laddie, is worth more to me than any hundred dollars I ever saw.

THE QUESTION OF TRAPS

"How many miles of trapline will I need to run, and how many traps to the mile," is one of the many questions asked by men who would like to tackle the wilds. This is another "facer" but, as a general thing, the number of traps used by the professional will number anywhere from two hundred up, ranging in size from No. 0's to a trap suitable for bear. If trapping for the smaller furbearers, such as marten, mink, etc., it is necessary

to use a large number of small traps, while if after lynx, wolves and the like the extra size and corresponding weight of the traps will have a tendency to cause the trapper to cut down on their numbers as much as possible. Even after the traps are all gathered at a central location it is still a sizeable task to scatter them over the hills where the game runs freest.

At various times I have run all the way from fifty to nearly two hundred miles of wilderness trap-lines, the most traps I ever used numbered between three and four hundred; on an average I would say three traps to the mile. This is something of a misleading statement (that is, in regard to the number of traps per each mile of territory covered). Sometimes the trapper will skip six or eight miles of line and not have a single trap on it, and then on a single mile of line he may have fifteen or twenty. A man could not get away with a good outfit of traps for less than a hundred and fifty dollars (\$150.00).

Very few professional trappers use tents of any description during the winter months, but for a man going into the wilds, where he is not certain of any exact location, some form of shelter is mighty handy. Therefore, the same outfit as we mentioned for the auto trapper, namely a wall tent and small camp stove, would come in about right.

But one should not think for a minute that a single stove will do on a wilderness trapline; every cabin where the trapper hangs out for even a night now and again MUST have some form of stove or fireplace. Allow me to say right here that the ordinary fireplace is absolutely no good for the man who traps in a cold climate. It takes a lot of hard work,

with the right sort of material, to make one so that it is fire and smoke proof but even then it keeps a man busy cutting wood for them. There are various kinds of stoves, some of them mighty poor excuses, for use in the woods; some of the folding ones are handy to pack and all that, but fall down on service. In picking out camp stoves one should look for qualities that combine lightness and compactness with strength. Counting the one used with the tent, at least four more should be purchased (with plenty of pipes for good draught) costing at least another \$40.00.

A very important item on the list of the wilderness trapper's outfit is the matter of bedding. During the bitter cold months, when a man is forced to tramp through freshly fallen snow from one cabin to the next it is well-nigh a physical impossibility to carry enough bedding with him. The task of breaking fresh trails, every now and again, on snowshoes is sufficient in itself without the trapper loading himself down with blankets. So, it is necessary for one to figure on enough blankets to outfit the various cabins. The professional trapper is ordinarily a hardened individual who can get along with surprisingly scanty bedding, but the tenderfoot should not figure on doing this. Two double blankets to each cabin will prove little enough indeed, or say ten to the outfit; we will allow \$125.00 for bedding.

The axe question is another sticker; a small trapping axe will do to carry about with one but they are a bum excuse when it comes to cutting a good supply of wood at each camp. Personally I have had as many as seven good axes scattered over my trap-



BEAVER HOUSE ON DAM BELOW MILE 27

lines, with a good saw thrown in for good measure. And again it is foolhardiness to go into the wilds with but one good axe; it may become lost, broken or the temper destroyed by fire. This latter event happened to my one and only heavy axe the first year I was in the wilds. It was a cold, frosty morning and my cousin, in order to take a little of the frost out of the blade, held the axe (a double-bitted one) over the flames a trifle too long, taking the temper out of it so that it was neither useful nor ornamental. The next year the same catastrophe happened to my hunting knife, when another partner threw it into the stove with a bunch of kindlings. These little accidents, while not amounting to a tinker's hurrah in a civilized country, border on real tragedy in the bush. I wouldn't care to outfit for the wilderness with less than \$10.00 worth of "weapons" in the shape of axes and hunting knives.

A pack or knapsack is very essential in the trapper's outfit and a good one will cost at least \$6.00. For firearms I would recommend a carbine of some standard make, not less than .30 caliber. This gun is handy in the bush, is proven as to quality and strength and will kill anything that walks our North American continent. Anything but a good gun is worse than useless in the bush, nothing can be more dangerous than a weapon which cannot be relied on. A new gun of the grade I mention will cost \$75.00, and it will prove cheap in the long run. I packed a \$90.00 gun in this country for six years and it paid for itself many times over in the game and fur brought down. A .22 repeater is also necessary for shooting small game, baiting traps, etc., and would account for an additional \$30.00. Ammunition to-

talling \$30.00 worth would not prove any too much. Shotguns and belt guns have proved neither useful nor ornamental to me, although a good .22 pistol (automatic or single shot) would go a long ways toward taking the place of the rifle of the same caliber.

Clothing on the lines of the auto trapper's outfit, with some additional footwear, a mackinaw coat, a warmer cap and mittens would suffice for the wilderness trapper and would set him back at least \$75.00. In dressing for the woods, even in a mighty cold climate, it is well to wear as few woolen clothes as will keep one comfortably warm; it is very dangerous to get too warm owing to the tendency of the body to cool off suddenly when not in motion.

JUST WHAT SHALL THE WILDERNESS TRAPPER WEAR?

The clothing one wears in the bush depends altogether on the different kinds of weather one has to put up with. For that reason it is absolutely impossible for me to say what anyone should wear except as applying to this neck o' the woods. A good rule to follow is to buy as little as possible until you get somewhere near the end of your journey, then you can see what the men who have had years of experience carry on their backs!

Headgear. For moderate spells there is nothing quite so satisfactory as a soft felt hat, with medium wide brim. A hat of this sort will turn rain and keep twigs, leaves and the like from getting down inside your neckbank. The common knitted wool toques are all right for sport caps in moderate weather but I have never found them satisfactory for

use in the bush on a trapline. In the first place they are not warm enough for real severe weather, especially if a stiff wind be blowing; then again they afford no protection from snow-laden boughs or from blinding sun and will catch on almost anything that happens to be in the way. An ordinary woolen cap, with good visor and fur-lined flaps is about the best thing I know of. One with a fairly wide or flaring top will afford the greatest amount of protection from falling snow and the like. The first winter I spent in the wilds I had no "headgear" save a light, summer-weight "sport cap." This I renovated into a genuine winter article by sewing flaps lined with rabbit fur onto the sides.

Gloves and Mitts. I have noticed that many men in this country are bothered with keeping their hands warm; this is one of the writer's least troubles. In the first place one should steer clear of any heavily lined gloves or mitts; it is impossible to keep any kind of hand coverings dry on account of handling wet snow, traps, and through perspiration. For real cold weather a woolen mitt with leather "pull-over" forms the ideal combination, but I have found that a fairly heavy pair of woolen mitts with canvas sewed on the palms and backs are mighty hard to beat. Either of the latter mentioned combinations will dry quickly whereas the heavy lined mitts prove well-nigh impossible to dry overnight unless right close to a good fire. In any case it is well to have mitts that are not too tight, they are much warmer if somewhat loose and may be taken off quickly in the event of the wearer wanting to shoot at game. It is a mighty good stunt to have both mitts attached to a stout cord passing over the back of the neck

as it might prove serious to lose one in severe weather.

Clothing the Body. One of the most popular, and deservedly so, styles of clothing for the outdoor man in general comes in the form of mackinaw suits. There are, however, just two drawbacks to this kind of clothing that are apt to prove a handicap in some cases; namely, inefficiency to keep out severe winds and a tendency toward over-weight or cumbersomeness. Understand, a mackinaw suit is a mighty fine thing but there is one other kind better still. I have been wearing a combination, the last few years, that should suit the most exacting: An army overcoat "cut down" to a short coat (considerably lighter than a mackinaw and far more windproof), a pair of riding trousers to match, with puttees for leg protection. Corduroy clothing is very good, save that it makes a devilish noise in the bush. In some parts of the "civilized" world it is necessary for hunters to wear very conspicuous clothing on account of the chance of being mistaken for game, but I will say that accidents of that class are mighty rare in the wilds. In conclusion of this paragraph on body clothes I would say that in all cases one should never buy heavy cumbersome clothes that will cause one to perspire over much; now and again I have seen men outfit for the bush with great corduroy or duck coats lined with heavy sheepskin. Such clothing is useless unless one is riding.

Underwear. Perhaps this should have come under the heading of body clothing; anyway the underwear worn by the wilderness trapper should be fairly heavy and all wool. Shirts likewise should be of good weight, the gray flannel ones proving perhaps



VIEW OF THE ATHABASKA

the most satisfactory of the lot. The mackinaw "stag" shirts are mighty fine in the bush and for all ordinary weather will take the place of a coat.

Footwear. Here we have the worst problem of the lot. By far the greatest number of tragedies that happen in the north woods may be laid at the door of the severe frosts that yearly clutch strong, hardy men in an icy grip and make them powerless to "carry on." Nine times out of ten freezing starts with the feet, or at least in its fatal elements. When one's hands are freezing one may still go on toward help, but when the feet are like clumps of wood the heart of the stoutest will give up in despair. So, by all means, Mr. Prospective Trapper, take pains to see that your feet are properly dressed.

In outfitting for all wilderness one must remember that he is going into a country where seasons change overnight, where the thermometer will register startling changes in the briefest of periods. Herein lies the element of danger in regard to footwear. In the late fall one should have some sort of fairly high rubbers or other waterproof footwear. The oil-tanned shoe pacs are all right as far as keeping the feet dry is concerned, but if there is the least bit of frost on the ground one is apt to slip and commit suicide by breaking his one and only neck. Seriously speaking, it is mighty dangerous to run chances of falling heavily at any time, especially if one happens to be carrying a heavy pack. I wore a pair of these pacs one fall and part of the winter; I was obliged to sew a piece of tanned moosehide across the bottoms in order that I might stand up on level ground.

For genuine satisfaction, during cold weather

periods, there is nothing to equal the Indian tanned, moose hide moccasins. The dryness of the snow during this season insures one against the dread of wet feet and this style of footwear is light and proof against slipping on the worst sort of going. The one drawback with these moccasins is that they will not wear extra good, this due to the fact that the "grain" has been scraped off the hair side of the skin, leaving a rough finish. This finish, while accomplishing the purpose of preventing the wearer from slipping all over the country, destroys both the wearing qualities and the resistance to water as well. Despite these handicaps, the vast army of outdoor men all over the north country use very little else. In selecting moose hide moccasins one should not choose the ones with thickest soles, here is a case of appearances being deceitful, the real thick hides are spongy and will not wear so well as the smoother ones of medium weight.

For certain seasons a light pair of waterproof (or so-called) hunting shoes with soles are a mighty handy rig and a pair of rubber wading boots are O. K. for water trapping. In traveling through the bush I always make it a point to carry a change of footwear; I have learned to my sorrow that one will suffer through exposure and I am still a mighty young man.

Socks. The only kind of a sock worth considering is a medium weight one of wool. Some of these great heavy lumbermen's socks of wool and felt look mighty nice but I would say to the inexperienced, "Leave heavy socks for the man who never gets his feet wet!" I had a pair of heavy, knee-length lumbermen's "Special" the first fall in the woods

up north of here. Every day I got them wet and the only way I could manage to get them half way dry was to leave them on and stick my feet out to the fire for a couple of hours and then finish the drying process by sleeping in them. This went along for a while and then one night I held my foot too close to a roaring blaze and burnt the bottom completely off the big socks before I realized they were getting too warm! Three pairs of medium weight socks, inside a roomy pair of moccasins, will keep my feet warm, as long as I am moving about, when the thermometer registers below sixty. For the teamster there are no doubt better combinations, such as sheepskin pacs, felt "arctics" and the like, but I am dealing with the professional trapper, who, when he does happen to get wet feet, must dry them in the shortest possible time.

CHAPTER III

OUTFITTING THE WILDERNESS TRAPPER (Continued)

THE *Trapper's Grubstake*. Only you who have learned through experience know what it means to be miles from a supply post and run out of the vital necessities of life. Could the prospective trapper realize how all-important the question of grub is he would dream less of shooting grizzly bears, of trapping silver foxes and devote considerable time to the collection of this same grubstake. Without traps one can yet catch fur by means of dead-falls, without blankets he may yet build fires and keep from freezing, even with no rifle he may still exist, but without grub he can do nothing but STARVE. I can say from experience that it is no fun, trying to live "off the country."

In selecting a grubstake for the wilderness one should be governed by common sense above all things. The plan I generally follow is to make sure that I have all the essentials, and to spare, and then consider what little extras in the way of luxuries I want to take. Following is a list of what I would buy, in the way of essentials, figured on the basis of one man for eight months:

Salt	25 lbs.	Baking powder...	10 lbs.
Pepper (bulk) ...	7	Yeast cakes	10 pkgs.
(small tins)		Lard	30 lbs.
Flour	200 lbs.	Beans	40 lbs.
Butter	40 lbs.	Cocoa	10 lbs.

Pot barley	15 lbs.	Tea	5 lbs.
Rice	20 lbs.	Milk (condensed)	1 case
Raisins	20 lbs.	(small tins	
Prunes or other		preferred)	
dried fruits ...	40 lbs.	Salt pork (or	
Sugar	40 lbs.	bacon)	40 lbs.
Oatmeal	20 lbs.	Corn starch	5 lbs.
Cornmeal	20 lbs.	Tapioca	5 lbs.
Baking soda	4 lbs.	Candles	10 doz.
Jams	20 lbs.	Soap (toilet)	5 bars
Mustard	2 tins	Soap (laundry) ..	2 boxes
Coffee	15 lbs.		

I will guarantee that the above list will keep any man going for eight months unless he is an actual "hog" or wastes his precious food in cooking. There is a science in the handling of a large grubstake that only time and experience can teach. I might write myself black in the face, telling the tyro trapper how to make his grubstake last out and yet nine out of ten would forget all about it when once in the bush. Still, I am going to try and give some timely advice on the subject for as I intimated previously a man's health is worth more than all the fur in the woods.

THE STAFF OF LIFE

Such has bread been called and after all, the man who originated this statement wasn't so far wrong. Twice in my short span of life I have tasted the bitter experience of being without flour and I will say that it comes as near to being tragedy as anything I know. Yet I have eaten bread (made by experienced trappers, too) that made me wish I had never tasted the stuff! Real bread making is the finest kind of an art but there is no reason why

an ordinary woodsman should not be able to make stuff that is at least non-injurious to the stomach.

Making Biscuits and Bannock. For filling an ordinary pan eight by ten inches, with a dozen delicious biscuits, proceed as follows: $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints (3 cups) flour, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoonfuls baking powder, 1 teaspoonful of salt, small tablespoonful of grease and $\frac{1}{2}$ pint cold water. Mix salt, baking powder and flour thoroughly; press in grease well and then add water, stirring with strong spoon. Do not work more than enough to mix well (with floured hands), roll out on board to about an inch in thickness, cut with empty can, set in greased pan and bake in a fairly hot oven. For making bannock proceed in the same way except not taking the trouble to cut into biscuit shape, the dough is simply smeared to an average thickness over the bottom of the greased pan. Out on the trail it is sometimes necessary to mix the stuff right in a flour sack, by making a hollow with the hands right in the flour and then baking (rather I should say frying) in a frying pan over the coals.

Pancakes or Flapjacks. The patent "pancake flours" are a fake in my humble estimation and I would sooner mix up my own dope. Here is my favorite: 3 cups flour, 1 cup cornmeal and the other ingredients (without the grease) that are used in making biscuits. A little powdered milk or egg powder, say a teaspoonful, will add greatly to the flavor and of course one will need to add extra water to make a smooth batter.

Baking Bread Like Mother Did. Pancakes, biscuits, corn fritters and the like all go pretty good



A HAPPY FAMILY OF CREE INDIANS IN THE
NORTH COUNTRY

now and again but there is nothing to take the place of real lightbread. This may be made in a number of ways but I will consider the two most used, yeast bread and sourdough.

In making yeast bread one cannot go far wrong in following the directions usually printed on packages containing yeast cakes, but for the benefit of those who can procure no directions I will set down a few simple rules: In the evening, an hour or so before retiring, dissolve a yeast cake in lukewarm water. Put into baking or mixing pan two quarts sifted flour (if you have sifter) less one cup for use in kneading; mix with one teaspoonful salt and small handful sugar; rub in well one tablespoon shortening (lard or grease). Stir in dissolved yeast adding enough warm water to form the right consistency for dough. Knead mass thoroughly for at least a half hour and cover well in warm place to rise. By morning it should be at least double in bulk. Knead again with a little additional flour, shape into loaves and after letting rise again, put into oven and bake thoroughly. Do not have oven too hot when dough first goes into it, experience is the only way to test bread baking abilities; ovens and temperatures vary too much for any hard and fast rules. Above all, after once mixing into dough, do not let the stuff get chilled. This will make a fairly sizeable "batch" for one man but bread will keep fresh a long time in the bush.

Sourdough Bread. In making sourdough bread there are two important things to remember. First you must have a warm cabin and second, an earthenware crock or glass vessel to leave the mixture in.

A gallon pickle crock is about the best rig I ever tried. A good sourdough batter may be started with a yeast cake by leaving a little over from plain bread making, or proceed as follows: Make a fairly thick batter of flour and water and leave in a warm place two or three days, by which time it will have soured, or fermented. When this is ready put a quart of flour in a pan and hollow out with the hands; put in a quart of the sourdough, dissolve a teaspoonful of baking soda in half cup of hot water and pour it in the mixture, add teaspoonful salt, mix thoroughly; set aside to rise, work into loaves, let rise again and bake. For making "hot cakes" add less flour, water, etc., but making batter thinner of course. For biscuits make into a stiff dough, shape, let rise a little and bake.

The chief trouble met with will be in getting the right proportion of soda to the amount or sourness of dough; the soda is to offset this sourness, otherwise it is mighty hard on the digestion. Only experience can teach one this but if you use too much soda your bread will be a sort of yellow. Whenever you bake do not use say the last pint or so of the dough; leave this in the crock for a "starter," adding enough additional water and flour to fill the jar about one-fourth full. If, through long absence from camp, your dough falls and seems to have no life when heated (signs of fermentation like that caused by a yeast cake), dump most of it out and start again. Here is one instance of where the uninitiated must go slow or a lot of precious flour will be wasted. Try to keep your sourdough moderately warm all the time.

DON'T GO TOO HEAVY ON THE BAKING POWDER

I have met with a number of trappers who never take the trouble to bake a batch of bread, either sourdough or yeast rising; their excuse is being "in too much of a hurry." TENDERFEET, BEWARE, is what should be printed on every can of baking powder! Of course baking powder is a mighty fine thing if used in a sensible manner, but to use it three times a day is one of the most foolish things a trapper can do. I have in mind three trappers who were located near me three years ago. Along about Christmas two of them began to ail; one with kidney trouble and the other had signs indicative of appendicitis. The third lad trapped separately from them and stopped a great deal of his time at a horse ranch where there was a woman doing the cooking. As it was, after New Year's the third lad was kept pretty busy going into the nearest settlement after medicine. When spring came 'round one of the sick lads came into town and spent several hundred dollars that summer getting himself "fixed up." The other lad grew worse and was taken to Edmonton where he was operated on for appendicitis. To this day both of those lads blame excessive use of baking powder as causing their sickness. While these two cases are perhaps extremes, I do know, from personal experience, that acute indigestion may be due to continued use of baking powder.

DON'T FRY EVERYTHING YOU EAT

The average wilderness trapper, due to strenuous exercise, has a cast-iron digestive apparatus, but it is a well recognized fact in the mechanical world

that cast iron is apt to break if mistreated. The frying pan is a mighty dangerous affair to the man who uses it too steadily. I know it is a great temptation, when a man comes in tired and ravenously hungry, for one to prepare a meal in the shortest possible time, and frying seems to be the natural thing to do. Fresh meat is practically a steady diet with the average trapper and one should learn to cook it in other ways besides frying.

Manufacturing Mulligan. One thing of advantage to the wilderness trapper is that, during the cold weather, he can leave a mess of mulligan cooked up in camp with very little fear of its spoiling. The greatest handicap in making a "mully" lies in the fact that one ordinarily has very few, if any, vegetables. Here is where onions will come in handy; they should be kept frozen until ready for use.

The really classical way to make mulligan is this: Cut your meat up into rather small pieces and brown slightly in a frying pan along with a few pieces of tallow. Then add all the onions frying pan will hold (sliced onions, say to the thickness of an inch on bottom of frying pan), cook till nearly tender, empty contents into kettle, add boiling water and season with salt and pepper. Let this simmer for two or three hours at least, over a slow fire; eat all you can and leave what's left for the next meal.

The ordinary trapper's mulligan is made by boiling a huge chunk of meat along with some pot barley, seasoning to taste. Even without any "fixin's" venison or moose meat is mighty fine if boiled until it shreds and jellies when cold.

Beans. Most anyone knows beans! I will merely say that in order to have a good mess o' beans it is



A TYPICAL BRUSH SHELTER

necessary to soak them for several hours before cooking. A little salt pork or jerked deer meat will season beans to a frazzle. In lieu of salt pork or bacon I know of nothing better than smoked deer or moose meat, commonly known as "jerked."

Dried Fruits. Most any kinds of dehydrated fruits are good when stewed properly. Prunes and figs are exceptionally good because of their laxative properties; either one or the other should be included in every grubstake. A mixture of prunes and dried apples makes a splendid dish but as in everything else, it depends on one's individual taste. Like beans, dried fruits should be soaked for some time before stewing.

Boiled rice is an old standby. This stuff should be boiled hard for at least twenty minutes with as little stirring as possible. The Chinese claim the water boiled from the rice is more nourishing than the grains themselves and I believe there is more truth than poetry in that statement.

Luxuries in the Wilds. Some men are content to go out in the woods with the barest necessities of life; I prefer taking a few luxuries, which of course depend on what the individual calls "luxuries." Here is my list: A few cans of peanut butter, syrups, concentrated soups, a jar of pickles, spices, brown sugar and mapeline for making "maple sugar" (fine on hot cakes) and some dehydrated vegetables. At the outset these articles may seem expensive, but it must be remembered that some of them act as substitutes for things already included. For instance, syrups and brown sugar will allow reducing the amount of other sweets.

The grubstake I have listed will cost on the aver-

age approximately \$120.00, or \$15.00 per month per man, exclusive of the cost of transportation. This grubstake will weigh around seven hundred pounds.

The main thing, in getting the most out of a grubstake, is to keep from wasting anything and to vary the diet so as to get the most out of everything. For instance do not eat all the jam up at the first crack—string it along and it will taste all the better.

CHAPTER IV

OUTFITTING THE WILDERNESS TRAPPER (Continued)

COOKING UTENSILS. A grubstake would have to be eaten raw unless one has a few cooking utensils such as frying pans, stewing kettles, baking pans, large pan for mixing bread dough, plates, cups, knives, forks and spoons. There are some admirable "Kooking Kits" on the market, some of the inexpensive ones will prove quite the clear thing for a trapper. In all events it must be remembered that the wilderness trapper should have enough of the simpler utensils and eating artillery to furnish all of his cabins. About \$15.00 will buy an amazing lot of this "junk."

The Trapper's Miscellany. If some of you who aspire to follow the example we "wild and woolly" trappers have set, could only see the marvelous collection of stuff that goes into making a real trapping outfit, you would get scared at the very start. Dog sleighs and harness, fish nets and fishing tackle, snare wire and snare cord, fleshing knives and razors, sewing kits, hammers and hand saws, planes and augers, insect ointments, medicine chests and dope for making scents; stretchers and the devil knows what! The second year I trapped in this country I had all those and more with two canoes thrown in. A lot of this stuff one can get along without but the wilderness trapper must at least have one pair of

good snowshoes (I always use two pairs, one large one for breaking fresh trails after a heavy snow and a smaller pair for broken-trail work). Some kind of a boat or canoe is necessary in most cases and will cost around \$75.00. So, here is what you are up against:

Transportation (train fare and any hauling of outfit)	\$ 200.00
Dogs (including sleigh, packs, and harness)	100.00
Traps	150.00
Tent	25.00
Stoves	40.00
Bedding	125.00
Axes and hunting knife.....	10.00
Rifle (large caliber)	75.00
Rifle or automatic pistol, caliber .22.....	30.00
Ammunition	30.00
Clothing	75.00
Grubstake	120.00
Cooking utensils	15.00
Snowshoes and miscellaneous small articles	15.00
Canoe	75.00
Hunting and trapping license.....	25.00
Incidentals	40.00
Total.....	<hr/> \$1,150.00

I have seen a large number of outfits and I know that in nine cases out of ten the man who does spend a thousand dollars on an outfit will never get even half of it back the first year—you have got to stick with it for at least the second year in order to get anything like favorable results. The first year you are green to the game you intend to trap; green to the country and green to its climatic conditions. The man who traps one place this year and spends his next winter a thousand miles removed from there can not hope to keep in line with such changes.



A "FLUKE" — GOLDEN EAGLE IN FOX TRAP

WHAT CAN ONE MAKE IN A YEAR'S WILDERNESS TRAPPING?

Now and again, in reading accounts of trapping expeditions, one will come across interesting photographs of extraordinary catches, say, for instance, the picture of three dark marten with this explanation accompanying, "Three marten taken in one day by A. Trapper, value \$150.00." Frankly, I have had pictures of this class, illustrating my own unusual catches at various times, published. In publishing such facts I have always tried to impress the idea that such incidents are very rare indeed; still a lot of people will take it for granted that such occurrences are quite common. Too little are the facts made public that men who trap the wilds make dozens of hard trips on which they do not take enough furs to make their salt!

On the average, the very best of trappers cannot hope to make more than a thousand dollars a year and the vast majority of them don't make more than a half of that sum. But, if you will yet persist in believing fairy tales, there is but one remedy and that is TRY IT.

WILDERNESS VERSUS TRAPPING AT HOME

To those who are fortunate enough to afford either an outfit for wilderness trapping or the "Auto Trapper's Outfit," I would say by all means try the latter—if you don't make a success of it you can at least dispose of your outfit for something like its real value, whereas, if the wilderness game proves not so romantic and profitable, about the only thing you can do is to hang your traps in the trees, leave your

cabins to the mountain rats, and "beat it," a sadder and wiser man!

My reason in advising anyone with trapping proclivities to try the tamer and safer game at first is simply because I know from experience that the latter is not "what it's cracked up to be," so when you read this article dealing with "The Wilderness Trapping Game" remember that I am advising no one to try it, but I would like to help those who do insist on tackling the wilds.

THE TRAPPER'S HEADQUARTERS

Every wilderness trapper has a headquarters; generally a roomy cabin, say twelve by sixteen, where he keeps the bulk of his supplies and where he "hangs out" a large share of the season. The location of this cabin almost always depends on its accessibility or nearness to the point where the grubstake and outfit are unloaded. Thus, if the trapper takes his outfit down some large stream and up a smaller tributary, he will have his head camp right on the latter-mentioned stream at a point selected according to various circumstances which we will here consider. As much as possible one should have the headquarters located in a fairly central location with respect to the various traplines, but very rarely is this altogether practical and it is often necessary to run the whole trapline in one direction from the head camp.

For obvious reasons the head camp should be made as warm and cheery as time permits; it should be provided with some sort of windows and a sizeable, snug-fitting door. A lean-to for the purpose

of storing a quantity of good dry fuel is well worth the time required to build.

The construction of the head camp will require probably as much time as the building of three or four side camps, the amount required in any case depending on the degree of one's skill with an axe. Allow me to advise, in all friendliness, that if you do not know HOW to use an axe, BE CAREFUL, nothing is more dangerous than a sharp axe in the hands of a novice. In cutting trees for logs, in fact whenever using the axe, be sure that nothing is in the path of the tool as you swing it overhead and do not strike too slanting a blow, the blade is easily deflected toward your feet. The only way to become a good axeman is to practice persistently and with some purpose, do not try to see how many blows you can strike, strive to hit the exact spot aimed at with a free, easy swing, not using all your strength each time you strike.

Most anyone has a general idea of the way logs are notched at the corners and any man who doesn't know something of how to build a log cabin has no more excuse for being in the wilderness than a pig has at Sunday school. Logs should be notched so as to fit closely together, this will do away with a lot of bother in chinking with smaller poles, an unsatisfactory job to say the least. Moss should be wedged in tightly and great care should be taken in chinking the corners as it is impossible for a novice to make a tight corner with the axe alone. The roof will cause the most bother. The easier way is to make a slanting or "shed roof" but a pitched roof (sloping from the center to both sides) will prove far more watertight. Poles of a fair size



INDIAN CAMP

are split and laid, flat side down, on the cross poles or ridge logs. The cracks are covered well with moss, and dirt to a thickness of several inches, and is placed over the whole. Unless there is a fairly steep pitch to the roof it will not shed water and of all detestable things there is nothing worse than a leaky roof.

A good floor may be made of split logs, but as this requires considerable time and no little skill the average man will go without this additional comfort or convenience. A comfortable bunk should be made in one corner, a table, some stools and a shelf or two for placing supplies. In making furniture, even of a rough order, a small plane will come in very useful, although the experienced woodsman can make some surprisingly neat articles with only an axe.

CONSTRUCTION AND LOCATION OF SIDE CAMPS

It is well-nigh impossible, during the period when the snow is deep and the days so short, for a man to cover any great distance in a day. Traps will be continually snowed under, fresh trails must be broken and all this requires time. I have now and again trapped all winter where I would have as much as twenty miles separating two of my cabins; this is too much and I would advise the amateur to have his side camps at least within ten miles of each other. In some countries even ten miles is too much, especially TRAPPERS' MILES. Where a man does much trapping in mountainous regions, after marten and fisher, five or six miles is about the right distance to cover ordinarily.

A lot of men have an idea that most any old sort

of shelter will do for spending a night in and I'll admit I used to have things figured out that way myself! Boys, take it from me, exposure will tell on you long before you have gray hairs! Rheumatism has done far more harm to wilderness trappers than grizzly bears and timber wolves combined. Many nights have I spent under a brush lean-to when it was cold enough to make one's hair curl, with one blanket and a fire that either roasted you alive or permitted freezing. Of course, if a man gets caught out on the trapline he may be forced to throw up some form of a shelter and camp there, but to deliberately start a season's trapping with the intention of practicing this kind of "toughing it" is N. G. Remember I am not dealing with a summer's outing but real, honest-to-goodness trapping.

There are just two kinds of side camps that I would personally care to spend much time in; either a small log cabin or a combination of a log cabin and dugout. For all ordinary purposes the log cabin, about eight by ten feet, will serve best; a good man can build one in four or five days. The dugout, while considerably warmer when made right, will take correspondingly longer to build.

In selecting locations for side camps the wise trapper will be governed by the amount of game in that vicinity; if trapping for beaver and muskrat he will have his cabin near a lake or stream where these animals hang out; if trapping fisher and martens his side camp will probably be pretty well up in the green timber. In all cases it is well to see that there is an abundance of good dry wood handy, not fallen stuff that may be covered with snow later on, but standing trees. While snow may be melted

for water it is far better and healthier to be near a spring or creek.

A splendid rule for the trapper to follow is this: Never leave camp without leaving shavings or kindling ready for starting a fire in the shortest possible time. One never knows what kind of an accident may happen to detain him on the trapline, and quite often he will arrive in camp with his fingers so stiff with cold that there is imminent danger of freezing before a fire can be started.

MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS

In running fifty or a hundred miles of trapline even the experienced man will find it impossible to cover the whole territory with anything like regularity. Animals like the marten and mink will freeze quickly when once gripped by a steel trap but any creature of the size of a fox or larger will suffer a number of days before they are eventually overcome by the frost. To guard against causing all this suffering the wilderness trapper should make it a point to visit his traps as often as possible. This will be to his advantage in a material way for his traps will thus be kept cleaner of "flukes" and be ready for valuable furbearers.

Under the category of "flukes" come any creatures that are unfortunate enough to get into traps and yet have no commercial value to the trapper either for their fur or feathers, as the case may be. Among these may be numbered the snowshoe rabbit, hawks, owls, ravens, squirrels, partridges or grouse, porcupines and now and again an eagle. I may say that this killing of innocent creatures is something most trappers do not care to have brought



THE TRAIL TO THE WILDS

to light and I'll admit that it is nothing to boast about! Naturally these creatures are a detriment to the trapper in that they set off his traps so that the possibility of catching something of value is precluded for the time being.

To make a success of trapping, the amateur should never cease to study the habits of the various animals; he will not only find this interesting but profitable in a number of ways. The tyro at the outset is apt to be amazed by the number of tracks and signs in the woods and it will be a long time before he can distinguish one from another with any degree of accuracy. Some tracks are so close in resemblance to those made by an entirely different animal that only long practice can make one proficient in the art of tracking. For instance the red squirrel will now and again make tracks similar to those of the weasel; the amateur will have a hard time in telling whether certain imprints were made by a small coyote or a large fox, and now and again a fox will walk like a fisher or vice versa. It is not my purpose to tell the difference between tracks and signs of the various animals. I will try and cover that thoroughly in the following chapters dealing with habits and the like.

We have been taught that cleanliness is next to godliness; I am sorry to say that I have noticed that a large share of trappers are apt to forget that old adage. Personally I cannot stand dirt of any sort; when my clothes get dirty I have got to do something right away soon or I will go "bugs". And I have always found that "a rub in time saves nine." I remember once, while trapping on the Athabaska, I was engaged in amusing myself over the washtub

and Mrs. Rapelje, the wife of a horse rancher, knocked at the door. "Why, you wash just like a woman!" she said. I don't know whether she meant that as a compliment but I took it as such anyway.

With the few articles of "furniture" the trapper has in camp it is only the work of a few moments each day to keep the place tidy. And it is advisable to keep a good supply of wood ahead—mighty nice when a blizzard forces one indoors for several days.

CHAPTER V

GETTING READY FOR THE FUR HARVEST

TRAPPERS who do not have some sort of a system or who do not plan ahead will surely fail to make the most of their time and trouble.

I am aware of the fact that it is much easier to outline a plan of campaign than to carry out what it calls for. Frankly I have never been able to follow my carefully formed plans to the letter but at the same time they never failed to help. Naturally the most important thing is to have cabins comfortable and a good outfit (including plenty of grub) in its proper location. But it must be remembered that there is considerable to trapping besides building cabins and eating up a sizeable grubstake! The way to prepare for trapping will depend somewhat on the sort of location one is in, the game sought after, etc., but the principles amount to the same thing in any case.

In the preceding chapter I remarked that there is much to qualifying as an expert woodsman but the best school in the world consists of the vast outdoors; a few days spent in the woods is worth far more than one can imagine. Assuming that the prospective trapper has "taken time by the forelock" and is well prepared for the winter, some time before the snow has fallen—we will now consider his next move.

Armed with a rifle, and carrying a small belt axe,

the tyro should start out to explore the wilds about him; as a precautionary measure making sure of his compass.

LOOKING OVER THE TERRITORY

A great aid to the tenderfoot will be found in the possession of a government map of the district he intends trapping; however, too much reliance should not be placed on the markings of rivers, mountains, etc., in an unsettled country—a large number of routes and such are merely figured approximately. When looking at a map one is apt to miss the significance of space, that is, what looks only a short distance on a map will prove actually a wilderness capable of hiding a dozen armies! A man may become lost in an amazingly small strip of country and a square mile of forest will afford enough territory for a man to study all summer. The thing to do is to become acquainted with the general lay of the land in as short a time as possible.

Let us say that one is located on a sizeable river at the mouth of a small stream flowing into it; in order to study the strip of country it will be best for the amateur to start up the smaller stream, keeping in the valley as much as possible or at least in sight of it. By occasionally consulting the compass it will be possible to get the general direction from which the stream flows. It is a mighty good idea to make a small map of your journeys, marking locations of various ridges, swamps, lakes, etc., figuring out their approximate location in respect to one another. This applies to the territory adjacent to each side camp as well as headquarters.



MOOSE AND DEER LICK

BLAZING THE TRAPLINES

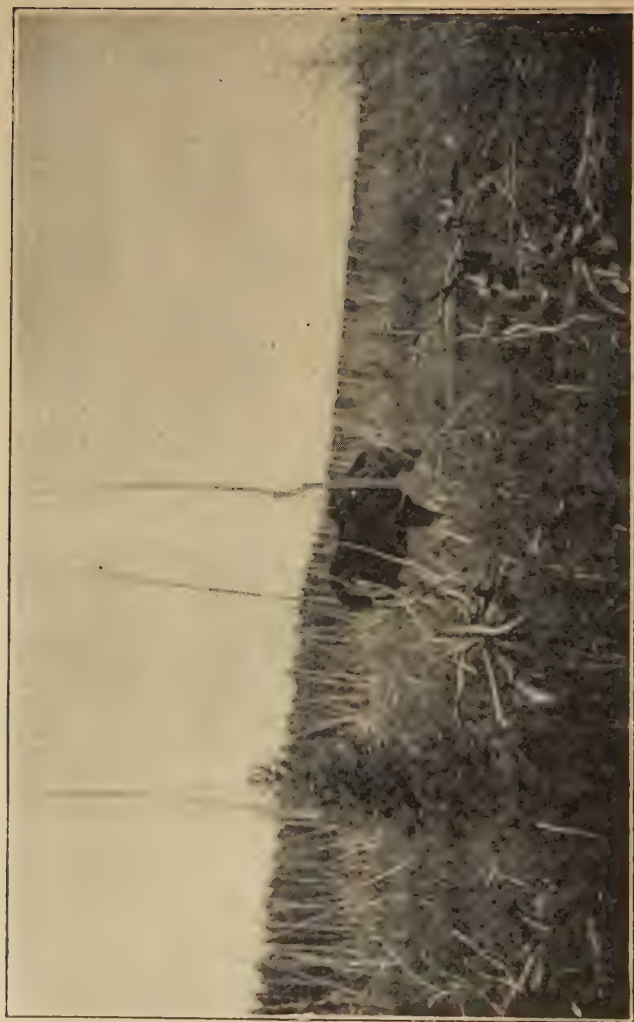
Some men can follow faint blazes and other almost invisible signs without slackening a three-mile-an-hour pace or better, others require a blaze on every tree and even then are apt to get off the track. I find that the average amateur does not look far enough ahead nor often enough behind. If one will persist in looking at his very feet all the time it is certain he will have no idea of the lay of the land. At the first the tyro will find it necessary to literally "watch his step," especially if he is not used to woods travel; logs, stones and sticks have a distressing habit of tripping one up and the uninitiated may be somewhat excused for keeping both eyes immediately in front of him. By glancing continually to the front, sides and in the rear one will have a picture of the outstanding features, such as high ridges, tall or peculiar trees, stones, etc., photographed on the memory.

The reason that so many get lost in the woods is because of their inability to retrace their steps when homeward bound at the end of the day, through negligence in looking back. Impressions will last but a comparatively short time unless one is interested in what he surveys; for that reason many are apt to look on all trees as alike, to call a hill just a hill and a lake just a body of water. This is a mighty poor way to start lessons in woodcraft. Say you are approaching a high ridge from across an open swamp. At the outset there seems to be nothing unusual about that ridge—just a hill covered with the ordinary growth of spruce, pine, etc. But look a little longer—what is that pile of sticks up

there in the crotch of that old dead snag—sure, that's an eagle's nest, a landmark visible for hundreds of yards.

Now the tyro would consider that ridge as a guide for a long distance, but let's see how things turn out! We cross the swamp, pass over the ridge and down into a pine thicket where it is absolutely impossible to see more than fifty feet in any direction save straight up toward a clouded sky! Paying particular attention to our guide, the compass, we journey on for another half mile or so and come to another ridge. We are certain that the other high ridge is somewhere back of us and are fairly sure of the general direction but not enough so as to enable us to start directly toward it on our return. What's to do? Well, here's a fairly climbable pine (don't try that spruce—it's too heavily limbed), I'll go up a way and see what I can see. Well, well, I see the old ridge all right and about half way between here and there is another smaller one, but a short distance to the right of the main course. On our way back we will bear toward this intervening ridge, climb a tree there and get another bearing which should see us through fine!

In blazing trees one should aim to have the face of the blaze pointing directly toward the direction indicated, not off to one side. If the trail turns sharply at right angles the blazing should show to that effect. When crossing a wide open space, where there are no trees or other distinguishing marks for some distance, a high, easily-noticeable blaze should mark the entrance to the woods on either side. In following old trails, of which there are thousands in the north country, it will pay to remember



LIVE MOOSE PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE WILDS BY THE AUTHOR

that blazes show up differently on the various forms of tree life. A blaze on pine or spruce will show just as clearly ten years after being made as the day it was first put there. This is due to the sap action which keeps the cut looking fresh, although growing a bright yellow with age. A blaze on birch, alder, willow or poplar turns a dull, grayish color, like dead wood, within a few months, and such markings are apt to be missed by all but the most practiced woodsman.

In learning to be a woodsman the tyro should first learn that God gave him eyes to see with and ears for hearing; by observing the old adage that "practice makes perfect" he will soon be on the road to proficiency in one of the most interesting and educative of arts.

USE OF THE MEMORANDUM AND DIARY

It is surprising how few trappers use a "note-book" or ever keep a diary, yet I have found both of these practices not only interesting but very profitable. Very seldom, and then only through forgetfulness, do I take a trip into the woods without my notebook. Some people have truly marvelous memories and can recall at will amazing bits of information; I am sorry to say that I am not so gifted and in order to insure myself of preserving valuable ideas and observations I must put them down in black and white! Thus if I have an idea for a new way of setting a trap I will write it down, lest I forget; if I notice some peculiar trait in the habits of an animal I also make note of it. I will guarantee that such method will prove of benefit to the most experienced old timer as well as the beginner.

The diary is not only interesting but also the source of valuable information, from one season to another. From the very start mark down a few brief notes each night, if only to record the weather; by observing the habits of wild animals during certain weather conditions one is preparing himself for the future. Today I can sit down and read over my diaries, covering a number of years spent in the wilds of Canada, and I cannot begin to enumerate the various incidents that are recalled to mind just through a few short sentences.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR GAME SIGNS

The wilderness trapper must figure on eating a large amount of wild game, this not only supplements his supply of grub to a great extent but is healthy as well. The tyro, even though located in a splendid country for moose and deer, is apt to go without meat of this sort until he gets onto the art of still hunting. In view of this I will here devote a little space to the above, as one of the most essential things is for the trapper to get his winter's meat as soon as possible after the cool weather.

I have spent a great deal of my time in hunting various sorts of game, yet every time I go out I learn something new; the obvious conclusion is that one can never learn it all and any advice as regards hunting must of necessity be merely general. No matter what sort of wild game you may be hunting, the very first thing in order is to grant that your intended victim has amazing senses of hearing, seeing and smelling and in order to offset these superiorities the hunter must use his brains or

power of reasoning. During the "rutting" or mating season bull moose are very curious and often somewhat cantankerous—the veriest sort of a tender-foot should be able to bag one of these huge animals in case it confronted him at thirty paces—but to hunt one of the wary creatures successfully later on is another problem.

The habits of both moose and deer change with the seasons, weather conditions having a great deal to do with their actions generally. In the summer time the moose and deer are bothered considerably by flies and gnats, consequently they haunt the borders of large streams and lakes so as to escape these winged pests. On the sides of mountains, in a country inhabited by moose, natural licks may be found—springs where water with a salty flavor gushes forth. These places may be discovered by following the trails worn into the mountain sides, often two feet in depth, where the animals have traveled for years in going to and from the rendezvous. Any member of the deer tribe has a natural craving for salt, which accounts for their liking of the above-mentioned licks.

With the coming of the severe frosts the moose seldom comes to a lick, consequently the hunter must look elsewhere for his winter's meat. There is a popular opinion to the effect that one can step into a pair of snowshoes and run a moose down by simply sticking to his tracks. This is all wrong except in rare cases when the snow is over four feet deep and heavily crusted. My experience has been to the effect that in order to get a moose after the cold spell has set in requires no small degree of skill.



W. R. HARE, FIBE RANGEL, FORDING LITTLE SMOKY IN LOW WATER

THE TIME TO HUNT THE MOOSE

If there is any one virtue paramount in the make-up of the skillful moose hunter it is PATIENCE.

(I have found the moose far more difficult to hunt than the deer, so will deal with the former.) In the first place there is absolutely no use in hunting unless conditions are somewhat favorable. If the ground is frosted heavily so that leaves, grass, twigs, sticks and the like rustle or crack under foot, the only thing to do is to stay at home unless a heavy wind is blowing from the right direction.

My favorite time to hunt moose or deer is during a slow drizzling rain or a high wind—the first element will drown any ordinary noise and kill the human scent, the high wind (if favorable as to direction) will accomplish the same things. Of all things that go to make a hunt difficult I know of nothing more disastrous than a slow, varying wind, that is, a breeze which is apt to change its direction any minute.

The moose is possessed with such marvelous senses of hearing, his eyes are so sharp and his nose so keen that rarely indeed will the most skillful hunter approach within gunshot of his quarry without its becoming aware of his presence. If working against the wind, on the fresh track of a moose, the hunter will do well to go very slowly, keeping a sharp lookout in every direction. Not once in a hundred times will a moose bed in a direct line with the way he travels; on the contrary he will turn at a sharp angle and lie down in a convenient position to watch his back track, or at least in a place where he can get scent of any foe that happens to follow. This

accounts for so many failures, on the part of the amateur, to even glimpse his fleet quarry before it trots away.

The best time of the day to hunt is from daylight till about nine o'clock, and from three in the afternoon until sundown. The rest of the day the animals are generally lying down and are consequently in a position to detect the slightest sound that may be broadcasted. Early in the morning and late in the evening the moose will be feeding and they are far easier discovered when moving about than when lying still. If one is familiar with the country he will be able to select locations commanding a fairly good view of regular feeding grounds—by waiting at such points, sooner or later one will get a fair shot.

As to exact localities where one may hunt with promise of success, very little can be said. Anyone but a fool can tell whether there are deer or moose in a certain locality—it is up to each individual hunter to decide which is the best place at the time he is hunting; what seems to be a mighty good grounds one week may be absolutely void of "sign" in a short time. With the first cold snap moose congregate, more or less, in small bands of from two to a dozen or more; they may feed every day for a whole week on a certain alder-clad and poplared slope and may be miles away shortly after. To be successful as a hunter of moose one must get "next" to the habits of these highly interesting creatures.

WHAT IS THE BEST RIFLE FOR THE MOOSE?

Frankly, there is no BEST rifle for moose hunting—there are, however, certain limitations as to calibre that every true sportsman should observe when choosing a firearm for the mentioned use. For deer hunting anything with power comparing favorably to the 30-30 Winchester will do but these guns are not big enough for moose—they permit of too many escaping with wounds that later prove fatal. What makes game in hard hunted districts so shy of man? Not the game KILLED, I'll venture to say, but the WOUNDED animals that escape to linger. The old saying "Once stung, twice shy" may truly be applied to the case of the wounded deer or moose. The same thing is true of trapped animals—any furbearer that escapes the clutches of a steel trap will certainly do his bit toward wising up his friends.

Now, most any old gun will kill a moose IF he is hit in the right place, but show me the man who can hit them even half the time in the RIGHT place and I'll name a hundred who don't even pretend to—good shots every one of them, too. I carried a .280 Ross for six years and got every moose I hit but one, this I concluded was due to a flesh wound from which the animal would shortly recover. I discarded the Ross because of its unsafe bolt. My present rifle is a Winchester model '95, .30 Government -06, and I believe that it cannot be beat for the purpose required. It has a 22-inch barrel and is handy in the bush, besides slinging a pill that will put any of them to sleep. By all means use the gun you wish, but don't use a small one on moose!

CHAPTER VI

TRAPPING THE FOX

LAST year I experienced the first real disappointment of my whole trapping career; due to the fact that trappers have no protection, as regards the ownership of traplines. During my absence from the trapline three other men made a complete circle round my territory, shutting off transient game from every side. To cap the climax I had my most valuable "catch" stolen and I swore "Never again!" But this winter finds me doing a little "spot trapping" in the wilderness; I sold my long trapline for a song and do not care to put any work on another until I can be sure of protection.

My spot trapping this year is waged against a few sly foxes that have escaped the attempts of previous trappers to capture their coats. I have found the fox not nearly so hard to trap as the brush wolf, not only is he less wary but being more regular in habits may be counted on paying a second visit to a likely location. There is a certain lure in fox trapping not found in connection with any other branch of the game—this in view of the chance of getting a "good one". Certain localities have a greater percentage of silver foxes than others; now and again a trapper will be fortunate and secure two or three in a single season but the average seems to be about one good fox out of fifty. As a matter of fact the second fox I caught in this

country was a silver but it was two years before I got another.

THOSE THOUSAND DOLLAR FOXES!

Last year an old miner, with very little previous experience in trapping, had the luck to catch a very dark silver fox. In common with the average person he believed the skin worth at least a thousand dollars. His entire catch was held (by him) to be worth twelve hundred dollars. When I first heard of the matter I was frankly skeptical of any trapper being so lucky as to get that amount of furs, owing to the general trapping conditions. It developed that the whole catch brought less than a quarter of what he valued it. What I mean to infer is that the trapper never receives more than two hundred or so for the best fox. If I caught a first-class silver tomorrow I would consider myself quite fortunate to realize two hundred dollars for it; I sold a dandy one once for \$70.00. So my advice to the amateur is not to figure very strong on catching a thousand-dollar fox—it simply isn't done these days.

THE HABITS OF REYNARD

The fox is one of the cleanest, slickest looking gentlemen of the whole tribe of forest folk. True he is quite adept at filching from weaker creatures or ones that do not keep a strict lookout, but Friend Fox has been reared in a hard school and Nature has taught him to remember Number One every time. His nose is keen enough to follow the course of a mouse as it burrows under a foot of snow, his ears so wise that every whisper comes to them and

his feet so swift and silent that even the sharp-eared snowshoe rabbit is hardly aware of their deadly rush until too late.

Ordinarily the fox is content to kill his own food but he is not averse to feeding off the carcass of a big game animal left in the woods, especially after the cold weather makes it unpleasant to hunt. In the years when the snowshoe rabbits die away the few foxes that stay in the country are forced to hunt assiduously in order to keep alive. His principal food during such trying periods consists of small rodents, partridges and whatever odds and ends he may pick up. Barely enough foxes survive these hard winters to assure breeding stock for the future but it is one of Nature's all-wise provisions that such survivors are so trap-shy that it is almost impossible to catch them.

Foxes have a regular territory which they traverse at intervals and this fact may be turned to advantage in trapping them. A trap set in a likely place (where a fox has been known to visit) will get him sooner or later. Blind sets may be used on trails which the fox is known to travel. This animal will frequent all frozen ponds at regular intervals, being particularly curious of muskrat mounds or beaver houses. I have found that an open country (where brush is only light, such as willow, alder, poplars, etc.) is more suited to foxes than heavy green timber. For that reason open country along streams, especially big flats, old river beds, etc., are likely localities. Frozen marshes in low country generally abound with mice and form favorite hunting grounds for fox.



HEAVY GREEN TIMBER IS NOT AS SUITED TO FOXES
AS MORE OPEN COUNTRY

BLIND VERSUS BAIT SETS

This is a much discussed question; a careful analysis of which should put all doubt from the reader's mind as to whether the fox is really afraid of the smell of steel or human scent. I am no disciple of either of the above methods of trapping—I use baits where I think best and blind sets when I believe them superior to bait. I do believe, however, that many trappers could employ blind sets to advantage at times when baits fail to lure a sly member of the fox family to the desired spot. A trap set "blind" that is, without bait, in a place where the fox travels frequently, is certain to grab him, whether it has been "treated" to remove steel odor or not. In my mind much of this doping traps is all bosh—it is the sign about the traps that gives away their location and not the scent of the steel. The very wisest foxes are those near civilization and they travel continually over and near objects that have an odor of steel or iron. The trouble it not in the presence of the thing itself but the tell-tale connection with other objects. An animal, even as cunning as the fox, has but a limited amount of reasoning under ordinary circumstances and there is no particular scent about a steel trap that should distinguish it from barbed wire or an old piece of iron. The same thing applies to the human scent—a fox will follow a man's fresh tracks as long as he walks in a straight line, but the minute he stops and makes a lot of fuss around a set, Mr. Fox is going to make a wide circle and what's more—he's going to be suspicious of that place in the future.

A popular set among trapper-farmers is to place a number of traps around the carcass of a dead horse or other animal. Now this is all right, and a sure-fire way of catching a fox or two IF one goes at it right. The same thing applies to the wilderness trapper in setting traps around the refuse left from a big game kill. Traps should either be set right at the time of the kill or in a heavy storm, in either case the signs will be obliterated effectively. Some men will wait till the animals get to coming regularly, go and set a lot of traps making all kinds of fuss and then wonder why the fox doesn't come back again. It is the evidence of the human sign and odor left about the carcass that leads the animal to become suspicious and his keen eye soon detects the exact resting place of each trap.

One of the best blind sets that the wilderness trapper can make is the muskrat mound set. If there are any foxes in the country they are sure to visit regularly all lakes frequented by muskrats. Along in the latter part of November the 'rats will start pushing up their feed houses, and small mounds will dot the lake in various places. A careful survey will soon disclose the fact that Mr. Fox has a habit of making a round of each of these feed houses every trip to the lake. Traps set on top of the larger mounds and alongside the smaller ones and covered lightly with snow will soon drift over and present such a natural appearance that the slyest fox is in danger of losing his pelt. Some trappers make a bait set out of the above by burying a muskrat carcass alongside the mound.

TRAPPING BEFORE AND AFTER THE SNOW

Blind sets are effective both before and after the coming of the snows. Trail sets are easier made before the snow than after as well as sets where the use of bait is employed. One of the best ways to catch a fox, before the ground is covered with its white blanket, is to bury a foul-smelling bait and place the trap over it, covered with sand, leaves or whatever is natural to the surroundings. A set of this kind is especially good along the sand bars of streams where foxes are fond of traveling and will catch anything from a mink to an otter.

Assuming that the wilderness trapper is in a locality that will pay him to devote nine or ten months each year to his trade, I will show how it pays to start operations in September. First, granted that the trapper is aware of the general localities where fox may be expected to travel with some degree of regularity, he must string out his traps (set, but the pans blocked so as to keep anything from throwing them). Mound sets, in the more open places will prove O. K. for this. Digging down into the sides a V-shaped hole is formed, the traps set in the dirt taken from it and a tempting bait (fish is good for this) is shoved down in the hole. Now this may seem a little amateurish, but given a little time Mr. Fox will start coming regularly for his meals and all that one needs to do is to slip out the block when the time comes and the "deed is did!" Incidentally, the fox is one of the first animals to become prime, his coat being in first-class shape as early as the forepart of November. Along in February foxes start to "rub"

and their hair comes off in patches, which, while not alarming in size, are nevertheless sufficient to cut the value of the pelt in half.

The greatest trouble the fox trapper will experience comes in trying to keep his traps in working order after the snow comes. A nice flurry of snow will cover traps just right, maybe the very next day it thaws so that traps freeze the following night and a fox can walk all over them without throwing the trigger. There seems to be no way to overcome this. When the snow is cold and dry a trap may be covered entirely with it and danger of freezing will follow; it is better to have a piece of paper under the trap and another piece, the size of the jaws when spread out, to cover it, snow or dirt, as the case may require, being sifted lightly over all.

THE PROPER USE OF SCENT BAITES

Most every trapper has some special kind of scent which he swears by, some of them go so far as to sprinkle everything they handle with a diabolical stench. It is a fact that I have been able to tell the presence of four different trappers through the scents they carried and to distinguish between the four when blindfolded! That sounds pretty far-fetched but it was certainly easy to do. If I were taking over a trapline that had been run for a successive number of years I would want to have a sample of the various kinds of scents used on the said trapline. Why? Well, because I would want to use something different! Animals that travel in a given territory will know a trapper by the scent he uses just as quick as you will know your lady friend by the perfume she affects.



A FINE SILVER FOX

I can recall one trapper in particular who used such a diabolical amount of anise oil in his scents that the foxes got so they would make a wide circle whenever passing his sets. Not because they were prejudiced against anise oil, but because the presence of it gave away the game!

The two best "natural" baits I have employed satisfactorily in the capture of sly Reynard are "skunk" and "fish." I always value the carcass of a skunk far more than its pelt, indeed, if the pelt is not an extra good one, I will use it too. The best way to use the carcass is to chop up the whole works, in small pieces, place it in a large can, sprinkle the scent over it and allow the whole thing to sour. This stuff not only has an unheavenly stench to it—but it is a natural bait peculiarly attractive to a fox. A scent composed of two parts anise oil to one of skunk essence, with some of the oil fried out and a little alcohol added (to prevent freezing) is fairly good.

Next to skunk as a natural bait for fox, comes fish. It may be used in two ways, either in the oil or flesh alone. Fish oil may be made in the fall by cutting fish into small pieces, shoving them down the neck of a large bottle, corking tightly and allowing to rot. The flesh may be used in various ways; either fresh, rotted or dried. The only objection to using fresh fish lies in its tendency to freeze readily and thus destroy its odor or the power to attract. Rotten fish has a smell all its own and it takes considerable cold weather to have any effect on it. Smoked fish has a peculiarly pungent odor and while not exactly a natural bait, certainly proves

a powerful attractor for the animal under discussion.

At certain seasons I have found mice to be very bad while trapping foxes through their eating up every vestige of bait. In stringing out a hundred traps or more it is impossible to have large baits at every set and the mice trouble cannot be overcome readily in that manner. By experimenting continually I finally discovered that smoked fish could be employed in a way that fooled the mice. When smoked or dried sufficiently fish flesh will crumble quite readily; I took advantage of this fact and powdered the stuff as fine as possible. This, when sprinkled about the set, while still retaining its attractive powers, was in too fine a state for the mice to bother much.

Another natural bait and one which proves most effective along toward the middle of February, or at the tag end of the fox trapping season, is the matrix of the female fox. This may be bottled, along with a little alcohol and will do the trick in mating season.

FASTENING TRAPS TO DRAGS

A much mooted question is whether it is best to stake fox traps solid or to fasten them to loose clogs or drags. I have found that all depends on the particular set; that is, if trapping at a spot where more than one trap may be set to advantage it is best to clog the trap as in case an animal gets into one trap he will take it a short distance away without disturbing the other sets. In defense of fastening traps solid I will say that one is certain of having his catch where he can find it, as very

rarely will a fox escape from a good trap—a No. 3 being the best size to use.

MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS

Sometimes it is necessary to make a fresh set in snow and at all times it is desirable to make things appear as naturally as possible. In setting a trap near the base of a tree or under a willow clump one can destroy the appearance of suspicious sign by rubbing two dried sticks together while held close over the set. A fine dust from the crumbling dead bark will cover the snow and age the appearance of things to an amazing degree. I have caught foxes right in the daytime within a few hours of fixing such sets.

If a fox has proved his superiority to your reasoning by digging up your traps and throwing snow and dirt on them, try fooling him with a second trap, leaving the other one exposed. I have had foxes run my marten lines, robbing the traps of squirrels and the like much the same as wolverines; under these conditions a fox will rob a small steel trap with no compunction whatever. By setting a second and larger trap immediately in front of my marten pens I have fooled more than one sly fox.

Foxes generally provide a fashionable and rather expensive fur and it may not come in amiss to add a few hints relative to the care of these pelts. In cold weather nine foxes out of ten will be frozen stiff when taken from the traps; they should be thawed out thoroughly before a slow fire, or at least not too near the stove, and skinned carefully, having especial regard to removing the tail bone. In case one is too hasty the whole tip will come off,

greatly detracting from the appearance, hence value, of the pelt. In drying the pelt of the fox the stretcher should not be placed too near a fire, the fox has a real thin hide which will spoil easily through overheating.

If trapping with a view to profit remember that one prime fox skin is worth two or three "blue pelts."

CHAPTER VII

WAR ON WOLVES

WOLVES vary in size and color considerably, there being a lot of difference between the common "coyote" of the prairie and the coyote or "brush wolf" of the timbered country further north. The grey wolf of the south probably is only a color variation of our grayish black timber wolves of the north country. The habits and characteristics of wolves seem practically along the same lines; their cunning merely taking on certain peculiarities in certain localities where they are hard-hunted. People who talk of the slyness of a fox have nothing on the wolf, believe me! I have witnessed the actions of both in civilized communities and the wilderness alike and I can truthfully say that a wolf is far more capable of terrorizing domestic stock than foxes, chiefly because of his superior size and ability to withstand more hardship.

SOME PECULIAR HABITS OF THE WOLF

The chief peculiar trait of the wolf is this—no matter how hard you may study to outwit him, he will generally turn around and do the exact opposite to the way you had things figured! Because of this one fact wolves will flourish like the proverbial green bay tree, long after most of our wild creatures are extinct. I have trapped quite a few of these "birds" nevertheless and I have found out that the

only way to outwit them is to be at least one "think" ahead of Friend Wolf's instinct!

At the present time there are hundreds of big grayish-black brush wolves running through this country; their tracks are everywhere, but believe me, the fur buyers do not have such a great amount of them in proportion to the other, and scarcer, furs in their collections. WHY? Simply because the average trapper soon discourages of any attempt to trap the brutes and pays attention to catching a few weasels or an odd fox! The wilderness trapper must study the peculiar habits of the wolf!

One thing particularly noticeable in connection with the wolf is this: No matter how many there happen to be in a certain district very rarely is one seen at close enough range for a chance rifle shot; this applies particularly to a wooded country. Down in the state of Washington I used to carry a 25-35 Savage for the especial purpose of shooting coyotes at long range, but the only place the average wilderness trapper will be able to use his rifle on wolves is generally along a wide, frozen stream or over the frozen surface of a lake.

The wolf prefers to kill his own meat but in cold weather will make a bee-line for any carcasses that happen to be lying about. As mentioned in the previous chapter on fox, setting traps at a carcass is apt to prove unsatisfactory unless a certain amount of caution is used in the way of avoiding making and leaving any sign about.

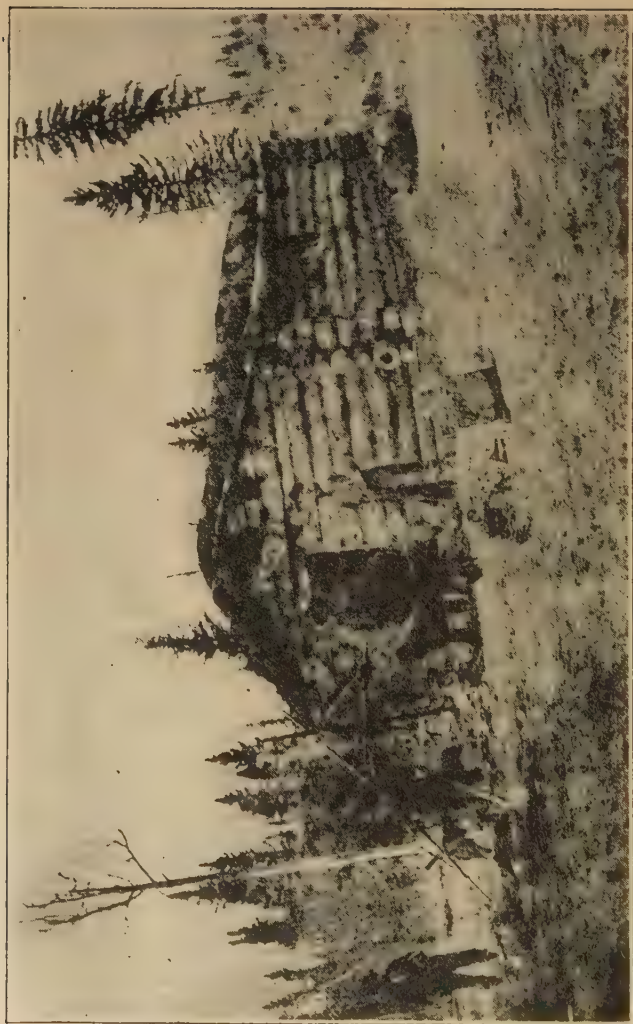
A peculiar trait of the wolf is that before approaching any suspicious looking object he will climb upon the nearest convenient knoll and give things the "once over." I have caught sly wolves

on old, abandoned trails by setting traps around an old rag or pieces of rope, using no scent whatever. This proves the innate playfulness, or inclination to romp, in these "wild dogs."

DEPREDACTIONS ON DEER

Under this heading comes the combined attack of several of the timber wolves on a band of deer. The timber wolf of this country is a formidable animal, often weighing over one hundred and fifty pounds. They make a track bigger than a yearling colt and step as far as a man with a yard-long stride. The first year I was in this country I saw but one timber wolf track all winter. Gradually they have increased in number until now there are several trappers who report wolves running through their territories. This may be accounted for in two different ways—either game is getting scarcer farther north or the winters are more suited to them than formerly. By the winters being more suited, I mean that the snow of late years has not been of such depth as to seriously handicap the wolves in traveling.

Unless there is considerable snow on the ground wolves will fail in their attacks on deer as the latter are so much fleeter of foot. The ideal condition for wolves is when the snow is crusted enough to uphold them but yet too light to bear the sharp hooves of deer, the latter floundering helplessly when attacked. When it comes to killing moose there must be at least five or six feet of snow on the ground; this causes the moose to "yard" or congregate in herds in a small amount of territory where they are readily surrounded by wolves.



NATIVE HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS

If the trapper happens to run onto any place where wolves have made a "kill" there is a good place to set traps; not directly at the spot, but concealed in the various approaches or trails the wolves have made. Remember, however, that if the least bit of sign is left about the wolf will notice it at once.

BAITS AND SCENTS

Baits used for the purpose of enticing wolves to traps should be natural, that is, if a wolf is known to eat certain foods, something along the same lines should be used to bait the traps with. The same thing I have said relative to scents for trapping fox apply equally well to wolf trapping, that is, dope sold by fur houses is apt to be worthless for the simple reason that it is not natural. Fish oil and essence of skunk are especially to be recommended; lynx meat makes a very good bait for wolves and beaver is also good. I have employed a little asa-foetida in mixing scents for wolf trapping and find it not too bad. Whatever one uses, a little discretion should keep one from scattering it all over the place, although I have heard some men boast that a trapper must stink like the devil before he can catch fur!

A good idea in using meat baits of any kind is to put them with sets in natural places: For instance, fish are better when used on a lake or stream that are known to contain fish, muskrat flesh is best when near a muskrat house, etc. The matrix of the female wolf is much more effective as a lure when used during the mating season, along in February usually.

THE BEST SETS FOR WOLF

Too much faith cannot be placed on the other fellow's methods of trapping any animal, to say nothing of the sly wolf—if you intend becoming a real trapper you must learn to rely on yourself. Try every feasible scheme you can think of, vary your sets or method from time to time (I don't mean to change your traps every day) and you are apt to fool the real slick ones.

One of the best sets for late fall is the trail set, either as a blind set or when used in conjunction with scent. In using scent (essence of skunk is best for this) squirt a little on a brush or stone where the wolf is apt to stop. Remember that a wolf is nothing but a wild dog and has many habits in common. Another set for fall is to bury rotten meat or fish, setting trap over the bait and covering very careful, with an eye to leaving things, as nearly as possible, just like they were before starting to make the set.

One of the most commonly advertised sets is made by putting a trap in the ashes of a campfire, but strange to say, while I have tried this set a number of times, I have never yet made a catch in that manner.

In making sets around carcasses it is a good idea to set traps on the nearest convenient mounds; the wolf is quite likely to climb on top of such knolls in order to get a better view of the bait. The wise wolf, in approaching a carcass where he is suspicious of traps being located, is apt to make several circles; by setting your traps a distance away

from the carcass you are apt to stop Mr. Wolf right there.

TRAPPING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

To one who has had years of trapping experience memory is rife with thoughts of how easy animals were taken one winter and how amazingly cunning during another season. The wolf is hardest to trap when his natural food is most plentiful—this is obvious; an animal that can catch a “hot meal” will be apt to turn up his nose at an old, frozen bait. So, I would advise the tyro, in tackling the wilderness trapping game, to remember that he won’t learn it all in a single season.

In this country the wolves depend principally on the snowshoe rabbit for their food, naturally when these little white animals are infesting the country in millions, the wolf has very little trouble in finding something to eat. A period of this nature is visiting the north country this very winter, so the trapper who intends catching wolves must needs do some tall figuring. Not only do the rabbits provide enough food for the wolves but they also persist in getting into what traps are set no matter for what purpose. The only solution to the problem now confronting our friend, The Wilderness Trapper, is this: First, he must provide the most tempting of baits and second, he must set his traps where rabbits are not so thick.

The first difficulty may be overcome by using fish or muskrat carcasses for bait, both of which are exceptionally appetizing to the wolf. The second consists in putting traps in open places, such as on rivers and lakes, where the rabbits seldom travel.

The snowshoe rabbit frequents the low, swampy places much more than the higher and more open ridges. Very seldom do they venture out on the frozen surface of a lake; to do so would be to commit "rabbitcide" right there, for if a wolf or fox didn't happen to spy any such foolhardy act a "tiger of the air" (big horned owl) would be almost certain to. By placing your sets in the open you are thus lessening the chance of catching a rabbit—besides a wolf is far less suspicious of a set in such a place than if in a thick clump of bushes. There is always more or less wind in open places, this element working to the trapper's advantage by smoothing over his tracks through the agency of shifting snow.

THE USE OF POISON

For trapping ordinary game I do not approve of using deadly poisons and even when used for trapping wolves I advise the utmost caution. Hundreds of good dogs are poisoned annually by trappers and countless other creatures are left to die in the woods, through the careless use of poison. There is an objection to the use of poison in that it affects the quality of the fur; however I do not believe this is noticeable for animals that are poisoned in cold weather, and in the case of a wolf is hardly to be noticed.

One of the most common and erroneous methods of using poison is to scatter it promiscuously about a carcass, in the forms of "pills" (small pieces of tallow containing a grain or two of strychnine.) A wolf comes along, picks up a pill and maybe wanders off before it starts to take effect. By the time the

strychnine does its deadly work the wolf is so far away that the trapper hasn't any idea where to look for him. Or perhaps the wolf picks up three or four pills which produce an over-poisoning; vomiting results and the furbearer gets away for good.

It is a mistake in any case to poison animals in thick brush or in any place where there is not enough open space to admit of tracking. However, if the following directions are adhered to, very seldom will the wolf get many yards from the spot where he first takes the poison.

First select a lake of fair size where wolves are known to frequent. If you are fortunate enough to have a fairly sizeable bait at hand, drag it out to the center of the lake, or at least a hundred yards or so from shore. Do not put any poison in the main bait but in enticing pieces frozen in the ice in various places. A muskrat carcass makes a fine poison bait for wolves. Take the body, while it is still warm or limp; cut gashes here and there in the meat and sprinkle a few crystals of strychnine in each, closing each gash carefully so as to prevent the poison from escaping. (A good plan to follow, in making poison baits, is to do all the work at some distance away from the cabin, thus precluding the possibility of dropping some of the deadly stuff in a place where it may be picked up by some innocent creature, or maybe get into your own grub.) By cutting a small trough in the ice deep enough to allow the water to seep through, the bait may be frozen stationary, leaving only the poisoned parts exposed. The wolf, in taking baits of this kind, will lie down and gnaw at the carcass until the poison starts to take effect and in nine cases out



BRUSH WOLF AND LYNX

of ten will not get very many feet away from the spot so that the catch is easily discovered by the trapper. The exact location of the baits may be marked with small sticks shoved upright in the snow, in a direct line with the bait and using the latter as a center.

Any small piece of meat, or a partridge may be used in the same manner, in any case see that the part that is poisoned is fastened solid so that Mr. Wolf cannot pick it up and carry it a mile or two before it takes effect. Yet another method much employed in the north is to take a piece of wood, rather decayed at one end; bore a hole in it, say an inch in diameter and two in depth. Fill this hole with poisoned tallow and anchor to the ice the same as described for meat baits, leaving the decayed end of the stick projecting a foot or so above the surface. The wolf will investigate that stick merely out of curiosity and will soon discover that there is something good to chew on in the end of the stick. It is important that the stick be not too firm, otherwise the wolf will not try to chew it, but if partly decayed he will readily make away with enough of it to get at the poison and the latter will soon do the business.

In skinning a wolf that has been poisoned the trapper will do well to see that it is thoroughly thawed out but if the carcass is allowed to remain around any length of time, after thawing out and before being skinned the pelt will soon take on a bluish-green tinge and the fur start to loosen.

Whole books could be written on the various ways and means employed in the capture of the wolf. I have merely tried to cover some of the better ones

which I have used successfully in my own trapping experience. Use your own initiative and perhaps you may discover something vastly better. Here's hoping so, anyway.

CHAPTER VIII

TRAPPING THE BEAVER

SO MUCH has been said relative to the importance of the beaver in the fur industry of America that I will pass this subject by, confining my remarks to what should be of more interest to our wilderness trapper—namely the habits of the animal and how to trap him. It should be mentioned, however, that the beaver is protected in most parts nowadays, and any trapper who takes onto himself the responsibility of breaking game laws does so to his own detriment and at his own risk. Trappers who do not believe in existing regulations in regard to trapping should take the matter up with the proper authorities instead of secretly defying what has been deemed best.

BEAVER A GREATLY ENLARGED MUSKRAT

There is hardly any better way to describe the beaver than as an enlarged 'rat. Both animals belong to the same tribe, are amphibious in their habits and have much in common. A muskrat will not weigh over two or three pounds, however, while a full grown beaver will tip the beam at from fifty to over seventy pounds. Then, too, there are certain characteristics so widely different that one cannot help but notice them. For instance, the beaver is equipped with a powerful set of four chisel teeth (two upper and two lower) that enable

him to fell trees often over a foot in diameter. Then, too, the beaver has a broad, flat, paddle-like tail while the muskrat's appendage is long, tapered and narrow. Both muskrats and beavers build houses, the former of rushes and weeds, the latter of sticks, stones and mud; but the beaver builds huge dams as well.

Every trapper should know of the location and value of the castors, scent glands located under the root of the tail and containing a yellowish secretion highly attractive to many furbearers. These castors should be removed from every beaver trapped and hung up to dry slightly before using. In connection with the castors are the oil glands, sometimes used in making scents but of far less value as such when compared to the others. I may state that, contrary to the general opinion, castors are not sex glands but are on male and female alike. Further description of the use of the castors in various baits will be explained under the proper heading.

There are two kinds of beavers, or at least we call the same animal by different names owing to the conditions under which they live. To explain: We call beavers that build houses or huts "Lodge Beavers," while the ones that burrow holes in the banks and live there are termed "Bank Beavers." I could never see any real difference in size, color or habit, so have come to the conclusion that what may be a "Lodge" beaver this year may live in a bank house next winter.

In nine cases out of ten the Bank beaver has his habitat along a deep stream where he does not require a dam to insure plenty of water, throughout

the winter, for his particular needs. It must be recalled, that while the beaver is an amphibian, that is, capable of living either on land or in the water, a greater percentage of his work is done in the latter element. The entrances to his burrow or lodge, as the case may be, is always under water so as to be protected from hereditary foes of the land; his winter's feed is cached in water and it must be deep enough so that a large portion of the green sticks do not freeze in the ice. Besides these reasons for having plenty of water the beaver cuts down trees and floats the pieces to the desired spot.

WILDERNESS ENGINEERS

The lodges which beavers build are enough in themselves to allow of the engineering abilities of the builders; yet the construction of large dams, often across swift streams, is a task of far greater proportions. Before beavers go to the trouble of building dams, they will first find a good location, where there is plenty of material for food—poplar, or cottonwood, birch, alder, willow, etc. The beaver has no use whatever for the “evergreen” variety of tree, and rarely will one find where the animals cut down such stuff unless one of these trees happens to be directly in the path of their operations. The ideal location for beavers is on a small stream where a minimum amount of work, in the form of dams, will raise the water and flood a considerable amount of territory.

In constructing dams the method of procedure depends on the character of the stream; in all cases it is necessary to first get a start with pieces of brush. If the bottom of the stream is stony small

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BEAVER DAM BELOW THE AUTHOR'S "UPPER CABIN" ON LYNX CREEK.
SEVEN MILES ABOVE WHERE IT EMPTIES INTO THE HABAKA RIVER

rocks are often used to advantage in holding the brush to its proper place. In case the stream is fairly wide the dams are built to arch against the current, thus strengthening the resisting powers of the obstruction. Once a line of brush is started the industrious workers pile mud, sod, stones, sticks and whatever else comes in handy until the mass is watertight. As the water rises it filters slowly through the top of the branches, the height of the bulwark being increased until the desired result is obtained.

Auxiliary dams are built below the main dam, in case the stream is swift, in order to relieve the pressure on the larger structure. If the main dam does not cover enough territory, additional ones are built above it so as to afford more ground to work over. The beaver is wise enough to have water as close to his work as possible, thus doing away with a large percentage of danger in the form of attacks from lynx, wolves and bears—the deadly enemies of the amphibian.

Sometimes, in cases where it is impractical to raise the surface of the water by damming to a greater extent, the beavers will dig long canals back toward a hill covered with the kind of trees desired. I remember of one particular place where beavers had dammed a small stream and forced the water back over a meadow and thus forming a lake of forty acres or so. In time to come the animals had evidently run out of readily available "timber." It was well-nigh impossible to raise the water so the resourceful engineers, instead of leaving the place, dug a canal like I have mentioned, about three feet wide, three feet deep and a hundred yards long.

Anyone inclined to mathematics can readily figure out what a really sizeable job of excavation this was.

The above instance is proof of the home-loving instincts of one particular family of beavers. As a general rule, however, beavers will change their locality ever so often. This is due to either one of two causes: either to the diminishing of the food supply or to floods destroying the dams or changing the water course. In the former case the beavers will simply move somewhere else, generally not so far distant on the same stream, and in the course of time are quite likely to return to the first spot, fix up the dams and put in a food cache of the new brush that has grown up during their absence. In the latter case it is often easier to go elsewhere and build an entirely new dam than to try to patch up the old one.

ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF BEAVERS IN A CERTAIN DAM

Our tyro trapper, in making an estimate of the number of beavers in a dam, is apt to err on the side of abundance. A few beavers will make so much "sign" the uninitiated is sure to figure there are three or four times as many as there really are. When you have become an experienced trapper you may be able to tell very closely by observing the following suggestions: First look along the muddy shores and see how many different sizes of tracks you can discover. This should divide the beavers in from one to three classes. You will be safe in saying there are two old beavers; in case of the presence of medium-sized tracks, from two to four two-year-olds; and in the matter of a still smaller

set of tracks there may be anywhere from one to five kitts. I have figured on the number and sizes of the various members of a beaver family by noting the teeth marks on tree stubs close by. In case of smaller beavers being about you will see where they have been nibbling away at a tree trunk below the point where the parent chiseled it in two. In trapping beavers, even in the heart of a wilderness where there seems no possibility of game or fur being totally destroyed, one should observe certain rules whereby the beaver may be left in sufficient numbers to assure of a future supply.

WINTER TRAPPING

This part of beaver trapping is generally given the "go by" as it necessitates more hard work than any form of trapping the writer, at least, has ever experienced. No, I will not say harder than bear trapping, but rather more inconvenient on account of the hardships in connection with rigorous winters. The worst trouble is experienced in cutting through the ice in order to make the winter sets. The average trapper will use his axe, and after a few attempts gives the job up in disgust as a wet, discouraging affair! There are two things that I will insist on having before I tackle trapping beavers through the ice; an ice chisel and something for dipping the cracked ice out of the hole. The chisel should be made of fairly hard stuff and fitted with a socket so that one can carry it about without the inconvenience of a long handle, the latter may be cut from any handy brush. A good ice dipper may be made by bending a small birch into a shape



A GOOD BEAVER—NOTE RELATIVE SIZE OF HIND AND FRONT FEET. PHOTO, COURTESY OF J. C. WATERSTREET

something like a small tennis racket and filling in the bow with rawhide.

In making the set select a spot near the lodge and cut a hole through the ice somewhat over a foot square. Before cutting entirely through it is a good plan to test the distance to the bottom, as a clearance of a foot or so is about right, that is, the distance between the bottom of the ice and the mud at that point. Make a regular V-shaped pen of DRY stakes by shoving down through the hole and into the mud. In the back of the pen stick some fresh, green poplar and stake a couple of traps, with long, dry stakes, so that they rest in the front of the pen or at the entrance.

A good deep water set may be made out in front of the house by shoving a long dry log down into the water, having previously figured out where a trap should rest so as to be a foot or so below the ice, notching the log so as to have the trap rest fairly, and tying a bunch of green stuff immediately above the trap as an attraction for the beavers. In making any winter set the idea is to put fresh bait in such a position that the beaver must tread on the pan of a trap in order to get at it. After the food of the beaver has lain in the water for a few months it becomes soured and a fresh stick is naturally enticing.

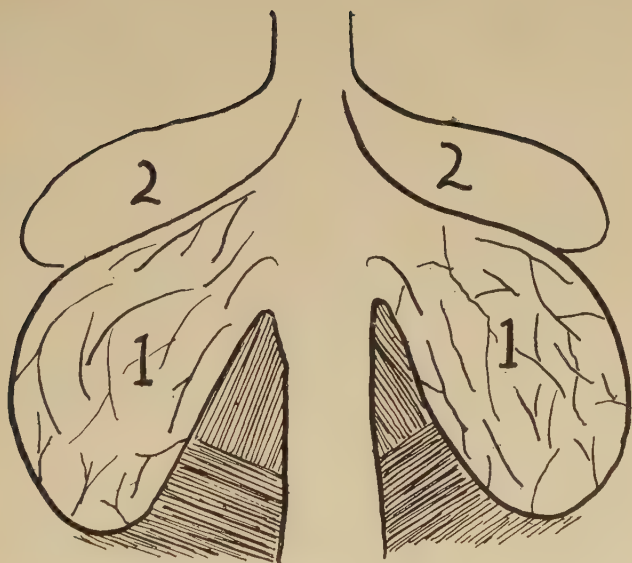
SPRING TRAPPING

One of the most interesting times of the year for the wilderness trapper is when the snow starts to leave and he gets ready for spring beaver trapping. Now the wise trapper will not wait too long to get after the big flat tails, as when the ice begins

to rot these industrious animals will work their way through and make a raid on the nearest convenient green bush. If the trapper waits till all the ice has cleared out he is apt to find a large number of the beavers gone from their winter's quarters on annual tours.

About the first thing the trapper must learn is how to drown his catch. The beaver is a hard fighter and if caught by a forefoot will escape from a trap in a very short time by wringing off. Then, too, there is a mighty humane element in drowning an animal and thus reducing the suffering to a minimum. The most effective way to insure of drowning is to weight trap with a stone of fifteen pounds or so. The tendency of any water animal when caught is to spring for deep water, therefore the stone should be placed so that when dislodged it will slide down into deep water where the efforts of the trapped animal to drag it uphill prove unavailing.

The sliding pole is sometimes used in case a stone cannot be found, but ordinarily they are not nearly so good. The ring of the trap is placed over a slim pole, the latter forced into the mud on a slant out into drowning water and tied to a stake at the top. The idea is that the ring, while sliding downward quite readily, proves unruly when it comes to being drawn back up the pole, consequently answering the same purpose as the stone. A general practice is to leave a few prongs or short stubs of branches on the sliding pole, pointing downward and of such size as to permit of the ring passing over from above, but these must be just about right or they will do the opposite to what is desired.



1, 1, BEAVER CASTORS. 2, 2, OIL SACS

In setting traps on slides they should be placed in pairs and slightly to either side of dead center of where the beaver is expected to swim, otherwise he will strike traps with his breast or miss them altogether. Traps should not be set too shallow, at least six or eight inches under water, ten inches is not too much. The beaver castor may be employed by taking a small green stick, putting a little of the stuff in a split at one end and inserting the other in the mud so that it hangs over the trap.

THE ONE GREAT SECRET OF BEAVER TRAPPING

The tyro is apt to find in the beaver an exceedingly difficult animal to trap if he does not observe one law. That is, if a beaver can tell, either through sign or scent, that a man has been monkeying around his slides or other used spots, he will steer clear of that point and go elsewhere. This is as true as the law of nature itself. How, then, must the trapper go about his business?

In trapping for certain water animals a man may employ the use of wading boots to advantage; this is hardly possible on a beaver dam—the trapper would need a diving suit instead, for the water is sometimes eight and ten feet deep. It is not always possible, in fact hardly ever, for the trapper to use a boat and by walking along the shore he is certain to leave all kinds of sign. This bothered me for a long time and I caught only an odd beaver but I finally hit on the idea of building rafts! Now to an experienced woodsman, who is forced time and again to cross broad, swift streams on any makeshift, the construction of a raft is the work of but a short time. Any tyro should be able to build

one in a half day, and it will pay him well in the case of beaver trapping. A few short, dry logs, some nails or wire for fastening the cross pieces on and a very serviceable "craft" soon results.

On a raft the trapper can approach the most desired spots, his traps ready fastened to drowning stones he can make a "peach" of a set in a short time without making the slightest fuss. One of the most successful sets I have ever employed is made by setting a trap on what I call a "scent knoll" for lack of a better term. This is a small island or knoll that projects above the water and in the springtime the beavers place daubs of mud on it which they sprinkle with their scent. Sometimes, owing to shallow water immediately adjacent to these "scent knolls" it is impossible to make drowning sets. This again may puzzle the uninitiated. The best way out of this is to use a log, say four inches in diameter and ten feet long, and DRY, to attach the trap to. Fasten the trap at one end and anchor the other out in the clear by means of a stake with cord attached from end of log to stake when the beaver gets into the trap he can do nothing but make futile circles around in the water, with the pole as a radius; it is but a short time till he is completely played out and the weight of the trap proved sufficient to drown him.

In some instances I have even attached traps to a log of the size mentioned above and merely rested one end on the mud or in a clump of willows, leaving the trapped beaver to take it where he chose. Most of the time such procedure will work all right and the trapper will generally find his drowned beaver floating out in the open. In a few cases,

however, I have had the beaver get tangled up around a stub or willow clump and escape. In using any form of wooden clog it is always advisable to use dry stuff; the beaver does not like to use his teeth on anything but green, soft wood and he is not so apt to escape by gnawing the drag in two.

The skin of the beaver is taken off whole or "round" by splitting down the belly and should be stretched either on a flat surface or in a hoop made of bent willows tied together and slightly larger than the size of the pelt.

CHAPTER IX

HOW TO TRAP THE LYNX

THE lynx is such an important animal to the trapper that a large number of men devote practically all their attention to its capture. However, I will say for the benefit of those who have had no experience trapping this animal, that while he is an amazingly easy animal to trap there are times when very few of them are to be found in any locality and too much reliance must not be placed on the number expected as a catch. For instance, I have known men to catch from fifty to a hundred of these big cats in a single season and at other times, trapping in the same country, have known these same men to catch but a half dozen or so. The reason for this will be dealt with shortly.

The lynx, while quite formidable in appearance, is really a small animal, hardly ever weighing over forty pounds. True to his nature, as a member of the cat tribe, he is a wicked fighter when cornered but will not openly attack a man. Like other cats, he is at best when fighting on his back, and I would warn any trapper who values his dog to beware of setting his four-legged friend onto a trapped cat.

The color of the lynx is a sort of mottled gray, sometimes so dark as to be a bluish-gray, in the latter case being known as "blue lynx." A peculiar characteristic of the lynx is that his fur on the belly is longer and more silky than on the other

parts of his body. This explains his ability to lie for hours in one spot without getting cold. The lynx has a regular beard, which together with the long black tufts on the tips of his ears, gives him a very odd and ferocious look.

The lynx has been favored in one respect where other members of the forest folk have been slighted. This is in the matter of feet. Did you ever observe how a dog, fox, wolf or any animal of like class, flounders in deep, soft snow! Well, the lynx is in the same class as the snowshoe rabbit, in that respect—he wears his snowshoes all the time! A lynx, while weighing considerably less than a small wolf, makes a track three or four times as big; his big foot spreads out over so much territory that he sinks a very few inches in the softest of snows.

SOME HABITS PECULIAR TO THE LYNX

Most animals travel fairly swift when hunting; the lynx steps so slowly that a man could easily outwalk him. If you happen across tracks of a lynx, made while the animal was running, you can figure that something alarmed him or that he was merely playing with a mate. When running the lynx progresses in a series of stiff-legged lopes that are ludicrous to say the least.

Lynx, once mated, are faithful unto the coming of the Grim Reaper. In the dead of winter, if you happen to notice lynx tracks in a certain locality at regular intervals, you may be fairly certain that there are two of the big cats. The lynx covers less territory in his hunting than any animal I am acquainted with, that is animals of like size, and he

is so regular in his habits that normally he is easily trapped.

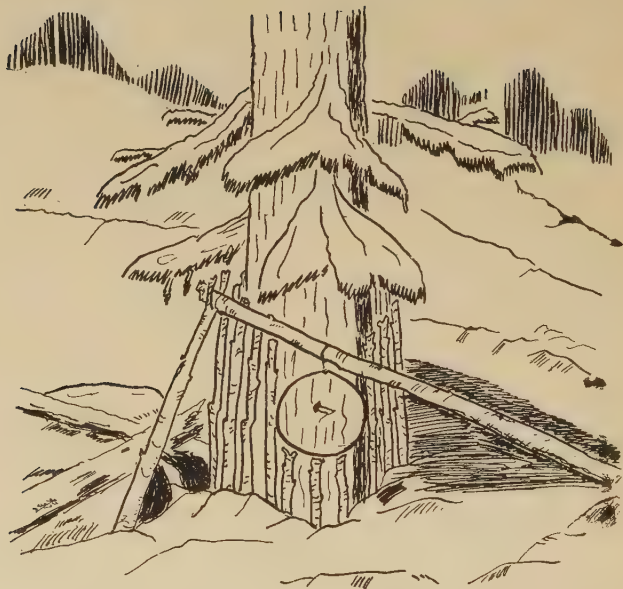
HOW THE LYNX HUNTS

As I intimated above, most animals do a lot of running while looking for a "square meal." The lynx takes his time and when he comes to a likely looking spot will lie down and WAIT for his meal. At the start it may seem foolish for an animal to lie down and wait for some unsuspecting victim to come along, but not so in the case of the lynx—he hunts exactly the same as an ordinary cat watching for a mouse to appear. Hidden alongside the runway of a rabbit one of these big cats will display an admirable amount and quality of patience which might well serve as a lesson to us humans. He is extremely fond of muskrat and beaver flesh and will wait for hours in order to sink a tooth in an unwary young of either class. I do not believe a lynx could handle a full grown beaver, especially if anywhere near the water, and certainly once the amphibian got into its proper element Mr. Lynx would be apt to commit suicide by drowning.

I have noted, by reading tracks in the snow, that a lynx will not turn aside for an ordinary wolf, if met by chance while hunting; a timber wolf, however, will put a lynx up a tree quicker than a wink. There seems to be an age-old feud amongst animals of the dog and cat tribes.

INDIAN METHOD OF HUNTING WITH DOGS

The native Crees of this country train their dogs to hunt the lynx and put them up trees. The way they go about it is to start out after a fresh snow



LYNX SNARE SET

and put the dogs onto the first cat track they come across. If the track is half-way fresh the dogs will catch up with Mr. Lynx in a short time and hold him up a tree. Naturally one needs a specially trained dog for this purpose, otherwise the animal is apt to chase rabbits or anything he runs across while on the track of the cat.

In the same manner the Indians sometimes hunt the marten and fisher, depending always on the ability of their dogs. I have found that in certain branches of trapping, especially where great patience is required, the native will outdo the white; as a rule however the white trapper bests the Indian because he works the harder.

THE RABBIT AND THE LYNX

Down in the western states, where I was raised, we had two kinds of wild rabbits; the notorious jackrabbit and its small cousin, the cottontail. Some years these rabbits were thicker than others but I never attached any significance to this fact, merely assuming that it was because they were hunted either more or less. At certain seasons jackrabbits have been so thick in some parts that organized "rabbit drives" have resulted in thousands of the pests being killed. At times when they are so numerous they are a real menace to the crops.

On entering the wilds of Canada I was immediately interested in the new (to me at least) type of rabbits that infested the woods. The season was late fall and the snowshoe rabbits were just changing their brown summer coats for one of pure white—the result being a sort of dirty, patchy effect. The changing of the coat coloring is Nature's own way

of camouflaging the poor snowshoe rabbit, who has more enemies than any other wild creature.

A fact that I have since remembered distinctly was that there were no partly grown rabbits in the woods that fall—this has since been made clear to me in that the rabbits were on the decline that season and had not raised any young to speak of. In the years that rabbits are increasing they breed three times in a single season, thus in numbers multiplying rapidly. As a general rule the rise and fall occurs every seventh year but sometimes the working out of Nature's plan is delayed till the ninth year.

Some contend that rabbits and other game migrate, that is, leave one part of the country for another locality; this is only true in a general sense, for at these alternate periods there are no rabbits in the whole north country. What really happens is that the animals grow so many in numbers a disease ravages them and soon reduces the tribe to a minimum where it is left to gradually increase again.

Now this particular chapter is devoted to lynx but the reason I have mentioned this rabbit business is because of its vital connection with the numbers of the big cats in a given locality. When rabbits are very few in numbers the lynx is mighty conspicuous by its absence, but with the return of the snowshoe rabbit the big cat also makes his reappearance. Why? Because the lynx depends on the rabbit for his meal—nine times out of ten. As I said, the lynx is very fond of beaver or muskrat flesh, he will eat a partridge with great relish; in the winter time he is unable to get any "amphibian" and very few partridges fall to his lot. Naturally

he turns to the swamps where the rabbits are plentiful—if there are no rabbits he soon becomes discouraged and either leaves the country for parts unknown or dies in despair.

The effect that a scarcity of rabbits, or the opposite state of affairs, may have on the lynx trapper must then be quite obvious. If you, as a wilderness trapper, are able to meet the conditions you are confronted with, you MAY catch quite a number of the big cats. But, unless you do make a study of these conditions, you are apt to give up in disgust.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE RABBIT PEST

Let us suppose our tyro trapper has been fortunate enough to land in the country when rabbits are thick and lynx roam the woods in bounteous numbers—how then must he go about setting his traps? At these times the ordinary steel trap is often worse than useless because it will catch a rabbit every time, UNLESS set in a place where rabbits are not so thick and where lynx yet travel. This is an exceedingly difficult matter to achieve and I will say frankly that the average trapper will fail flatly nine times out of ten.

Last winter was the first for eight years when the rabbits were in anything like their old numbers. I had occasion to do a little spot trapping, outside of running my ordinary trapline, on a small stream where a few lynx haunted the vicinity of some beaver dams. When I first went there a friend of mine had already set a few traps out but was unable to catch anything except a lot of rabbits and one porcupine. On investigating the “sets” I found that practically every one of them were made in what



LYNX TRAPPED BY J. C. WATERBURY

were virtually rabbit runways! No wonder he caught the rabbits.

When snowshoe rabbits thus prove such a pest to the trapper the only way out is by using the snare. The ordinary material for snaring lynx is a heavy cord of which Mr. Snowshoe Rabbit is more than ordinarily fond, and he will chew them in pieces as fast as a dozen trappers could put them out. What then, say you! Well, you can either treat the snaring cord with a preparation of lynx dung (a process not altogether satisfactory), or you can employ certain kinds of wires in making your snares. At various times I have tried all sorts of wires and found that most all of them could be broken now and again, especially in real cold weather. Lately a brand of wire, known as "aerial cable" for radio outfits, has been brought to my attention and it's the best thing I have yet used. It is made of copper and will stand an unbelievable amount of twisting and kinking before it will break. It can be procured in various sizes, a seven or nine-strand cable being about the best and is about an eighth of an inch in diameter. Mr. Rabbit will pass these wire snares by for they sure don't taste good to him!

METHODS OF SNARING THE LYNX

The average person would get a far better idea of a lynx "snare set" from a single glance at one of the originals than I can possibly give on paper. The accompanying drawing, however, is fairly representative. First the cage is built, generally against the trunk of a sizeable tree or heavy clump of brush. It should be made in a sort of circle, by

shoving dead sticks into the ground fairly close together; the circle being about eighteen inches across and the height of the cage about two feet and a half. A space about seven inches wide should be left in the front and filled to a height of about a foot off the ground by employing shorter stakes. In this opening, above the shorter stakes, the snare noose is to be hung. For making a snare a piece of wire slightly over a yard in length is required. The loop itself should be about seven inches in diameter, or the size of an ordinary man's hat. This will leave a surplus for tying the snare to a "toggle" that is, a pole about the size of your wrist and eight feet or so in length. The snare should be tied to approximately the center of the pole, close up to the extended noose so as not to allow too much slack. Now the pole must be held in the right position, at the front of the cage, so as to allow of the noose hanging in the opening just above the shorter sticks that close the front to a height of a foot from the ground. This is accomplished by using pronged sticks of the right length, allowing one end of the "toggle" to rest on the ground and propping the other, at the right height, against the front of the cage.

SCENTING THE SNARE

Certainly the snare set must have some means of attraction other than its amazing appearance to cause our friend, the lynx, to consider entering it via the front door with its tempting (?) hangman's noose! The secret lies in the use of a preparation composed of beavers' castor, fish oil and rotted liver, with a little alcohol added to prevent freezing in

cold weather. This preparation is smeared on the end of a stick and stuck in the back of the cage.

The lynx, by nature merely an overgrown cat, is fond of rolling in any foul smelling conglomeration such as the above; he approaches the cage, and being not ungentlemanly enough to knock down the sides of even such a flimsy affair, he will poke his head through the snare noose and lean forward with the object of investigating the scent at closer range. As he pushes forward the snare becomes tightened about his neck and Mr. Lynx, becoming alarmed, puts up a frantic performance which soon ends in "catacide" by hanging.

In making snare cages the trapper should aim to have them neither too flimsy nor yet appearing as a veritable jail—by using light, dead sticks a natural-looking enclosure is made of which the lynx is not suspicious. It is truly surprising what flimsy affairs real good lynx cages are.

FLAGGING THE LYNX

The lynx is an exceedingly curious animal and may be lured to the trapper's set by the placing of a piece of bright red flannel near the snare or trap, as happens to be the case. An ordinary snare set will depend for its success on the amount of drawing power the scent employed happens to wield—if the wind comes from the wrong direction a lynx is apt to pass the scent without being aware of its existence. However, should the trapper have foreseen this and placed a "flag" out for Mr. Cat he is still apt to make a catch, for the lynx has sharp eyes and a vivid flash of strange color will arrest his attention at surprising distances.



LYNX TRAPPED BY THE AUTHOR

In snaring the lynx the wilderness trapper should employ a large number of snares, scattering them promiscuously over favorable territory. I have known trappers to set out several hundred in season. I would warn every trapper to be mighty particular in taking up EVERY snare at the end of the season, for they are more than ordinarily efficient after the snow leaves. When the warm weather comes the lynx will enter the first scented snare cage he happens onto, and it's a shame to leave such valuable furbearers to rot in the woods. In passing through the woods I have time and again come across lynx snares still set during the closed season on trapping; needless to say I took great pleasure in destroying such sets.

THE USE OF THE STEEL TRAP

There are certain seasons when the use of a snare marks the trapper as an amateur, just the same as his failure to employ it when the rabbits are so thick. These periods commence when the rabbits start to die off in countless millions and the lynx are threatened with starvation. Then the big cat is not fond of such foolish tricks as poking his head into a scented cage—he wants something to eat! With no rabbits to speak of, the trapper is in a position to reap the benefits derived from the extensive use of the steel trap. An ordinary V-shaped pen, three feet or so in height, baited with a partridge or other bait will attract every lynx that happens along, although the scent as described for snaring will prove effective in drawing the lynx close enough for him to get “wind” of the bait.

The lynx is a very foolhardy animal and will step on the pan of a naked trap unhesitatingly. I have caught them at various times in small traps set for martens; if grabbed by but a single toe Mr. Lynx will stay right there until relieved by the trapper. However, do not take this statement as advising the use of such small traps, the lynx has a very big foot and it is more chance than anything else which enables him to get even one toe caught in a No. 1 trap. The No. 3, in a single spring model, is the very best trap for lynx; the ordinary jump trap, with the pan cut down to a sensible size, runs it a close second.

LYNX PAW ROBES

In skinning the lynx the forelegs are often cut off close up to the body, the part where they are cut being tied shut with cord. The pelt should be dried on a stretcher with the fur inside, turning it before it gets too hard; the bur being thus exposed in the second operation, not only improves the looks of a fine skin but gives the fur buyer a better chance to honestly grade the pelt.

The natives, in thus skinning the lynx, had two paws to the good on each one taken, some of them even going so far as to cut off the paws of the hind legs as well. Ordinarily, this last operation did not pay because it detracted from the appearance, and consequent value, of the fur. By taking these paws and sewing them together, the Indians finally had a robe, for which there was once a great sale, being composed entirely of lynx paws. The paws of the lynx are heavily furred, so that at first glance one is apt to mistake a robe made from them as some whole fur.

CHAPTER X

TRAPPING THE MARTEN AND FISHER

IN certain mountainous regions the wilderness trapper will find it pays him to devote a large share of his time toward the taking of marten skins; his territory will generally be good for a fisher or two as well. Generally speaking, the two animals have their habitat in much the same sort of country, that is, rather high and heavily wooded with timber of the "evergreen" variety. One name for the smaller of the animals in question, namely "Pine Marten" is conceded as representative because of this creature's preference for pine-covered ridges. I cannot say that I have found the martens of this western country prejudiced in favor of this kind of woods, but have found them equally as well where spruce and balsam were abundant.

The marten is similar in size to the mink, being much heavier furred and with a longer, bushier tail. The texture of the marten's fur is much finer in quality than that of the mink, thus accounting for its greater value in the fur markets. The color varies from a pale brown to one so dark as to be almost black; the darker skins being more valuable. Our western coast ranges have yet a plentiful supply of these little creatures but their skins are much inferior in value to those taken further inland and north. The vicinity of the Hudson's Bay region once produced a marten so dark as to closely resemble the

skin of the Russian Sable, hence its name, Hudson's Bay Sable. Incidentally the two animals are closely allied, the Russian Sable being larger and yet heavier furred than our marten.

HABITS OF THE MARTEN

In looking for marten the tyro trapper will do well to know something of their habits—they are so small that a large number of them might be in a certain locality and yet escape detection. Before the coming of the snow it is well-nigh impossible to tell whether there are any martens about—they travel rabbit trails and the like to such an extent there is nothing one might go by in the matter of trails.

With the first snow, however, it should be quite a simple matter for the veriest tyro to discover whether he is fortunate enough to have any martens on his "beat," providing, of course, that he can tell the difference between a rabbit or squirrel track and a marten track. The marten travels in successive leaps, much the same as a weasel or mink; his footprints being as large as that of a small cat. A good representative mark, and one that fools some trappers, is the imprint of the two forefeet of the snowshoe rabbit, placed side by side but one slightly in advance of the other. The sets of imprints left by the marten will ordinarily be three feet apart, although when progressing real slow they will be much closer together, and somewhat irregular.

During the forepart of the winter the marten is apt to travel considerably on the lower levels. One winter, while trapping on the Iosegun River just above where it empties into the Little Smoky, I



THE BALANCE POLE; BETTER THAN SPRING POLE
BECAUSE THE LATTER LOSES ITS POWER
AFTER A FEW DAYS

caught several martens on the lowland, a couple of them right in the swamp or muskeg. Later on they left the country entirely, this because it was not their natural habitat and they had merely strayed down from the mountains. The same winter I observed marten tracks in the vicinity of Kimberly or "Jackfish" lake, the only time in a period of a half dozen years. In a like respect I have known martens to literally overrun territory that was absolutely unsuited to their ordinary needs. Whenever you find marten tracks on fairly low ridges where the growth is sparse or mostly brush you can make up your mind that they won't stay there very long.

THE PERIODICAL DISAPPEARANCE OF MARTENS

Martens disappear from certain localities at intervals, much the same as the snowshoe rabbits; however the two different animals do not decrease in numbers at the same seasons. This is due to the fact that the marten does not depend altogether on the snowshoe rabbit. The marten is a clever little hunter and a regular "animated devil" on four legs. He preys largely on the snowshoe rabbit, to be sure, because it is so easy for him to capture one of these creatures. Nevertheless his dependency on the rabbit does not reach the same stage to which the lynx is subject and when rabbits are not to be had he fares equally well on squirrels, mice and birds. When the snow is too deep for the marten to hunt mice on the surface he burrows right in after them.

During the extremely cold weather such birds as the Canada Ruffed Grouse, Pinnated Grouse and Spruce Grouse, as well as the Ptarmigans, are forced

to roost or burrow into the snow to keep from freezing. In order to escape from the larger animals such as the fox, lynx and wolf, these birds tunnel under the surface for some distance from the point of entrance. The marten, however, with ferret-like instincts, tunnels right after the birds and it is a simple matter indeed for him to thus secure a nice warm meal.

Just why the marten elects to leave a certain district at a certain time is more or less a matter for conjecture. I can quite readily understand them leaving a locality because of their food supply becoming low, but on the other hand I have often known them to leave districts where conditions seemed to be ideal in every respect. It has been my experience that lynx and martens do not have their habitat in the same country at the same time—just why is hard to say. The presence of the lynx in any numbers is generally due to a plentiful supply of rabbits, as previously stated.

One thing that works havoc with the martens is fire—some districts just north of here have been cleaned right out of green timber this past summer; fires burned there until after the first snow. Fire is a deadly factor for destroying game, especially during the periods when the young of various species are born. Even if the martens do escape the ravaging fires they are certain to avoid any strips of country that have been burned over.

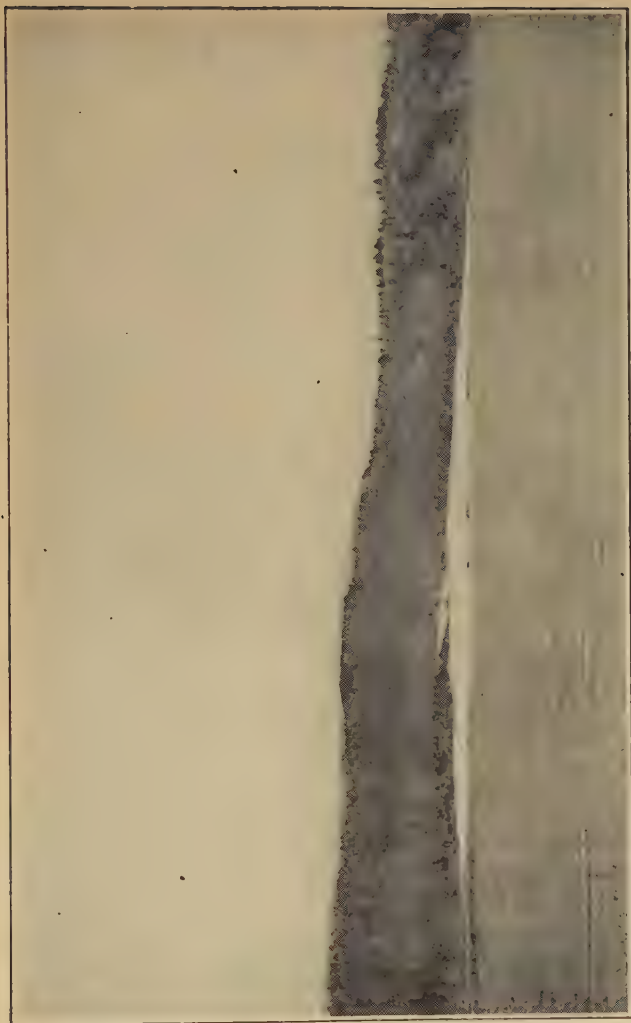
Merely as a matter of conjecture I would say that the periodical disappearance of the martens is due more to "nomadic instincts" or the spirit of wanderlust than to any real necessity caused by lack of food. It takes all classes of people to make

a civilized world so why not all kinds and natures of creatures to compose the animal kingdom. Martens are "clannish" in their habits and rarely does one of these little furbearers travel in solitude—more often two or three families will haunt the same region, making regular rounds throughout the season and the trapper who is fortunate will stop a number of them.

THE BEST SETS FOR MARTEN

Notwithstanding that martens are very easy to trap there are certain sets that will prove more successful than others. The most widely used and perhaps most efficient all-around is the "cubby house set," merely a small pen built of stakes, say fifteen inches deep and about five inches in width. There was a time when I felt there were a number of better "tree" sets, that is, sets elevated above the ground so as to escape the heavy snows; but in view of further experience I have returned to the old standard, the "pen" or "cubby house" set.

The cubby house has one very bad failing—it acts as a great attraction for "flukes" that is, small animals and birds that have no value, such as rabbits, small owls, squirrels of various kinds, jays and birds of all sorts. I believe the squirrels may be counted as the worst of the lot but conditions may be remedied somewhat by choosing the right location for building the pens. In trapping martens the idea is to first discover the more favored localities and there set out a large number of small traps. The tyro is apt to put all of his sets against the bases of wide-spreading trees and thus protect his sets from heavy snow. This is all right for the one



GOOD MARTEN COUNTRY ALONG THE ATHABASKA

purpose but makes for too much of an attraction for squirrels, the animals in running up or down the trunk of the tree will be sure to go through the cubby and get into the trap. When one considers that there are dozens of squirrels in the near neighborhood of a single set anything that is apt to draw them will prove a serious drawback indeed. Nothing is more disheartening than for the trapper to note where a marten has been to a half dozen or so of his traps with every one of them incapable of making a catch through being "full up" with squirrels or other flukes.

A large share of this squirrel nuisance may be done away with by building the pen sets against the base of dead trees or a slight distance away from the trunks of green ones; if the set is not directly in line with the natural path of the squirrels it won't be near as apt to attract them. Another way to avoid them is to throw any dead squirrels that happen to be caught some distance away; by putting them in the cubby house as bait they are sure to attract additional ones.

In all cases it is well to cover the tops of the cubby sets so as to keep off the greater part of each snowfall. Whenever the snow becomes so deep that a marten has to burrow down to get into one of these sets it is high time they were raised up. The chief reason why I personally prefer cubby sets to any other is in their power of attraction. A marten is a very inquisitive creature and will often investigate an empty cubby set just out of curiosity. The marten does most of his traveling on the ground and I have known him to deliberately pass underneath an elevated or "tree" set and get caught in

a cubby set simply because it seemed natural for him to investigate.

Tree or elevated sets are made in various ways; all of them are made on the false notion that martens spend most of their time above the ground or snow. The most common sets are made by cutting notches in trees, a few feet above the surface of the snow, and setting the traps in these pockets. Another set is made by driving pegs into the trunks of trees for the traps to rest in. In either case the baits are hung slightly above the trap and against the trunk of the tree.

BAITS AND SCENTS FOR THE MARTEN

A scent that has proved quite successful with me is composed of one part anise oil, four parts fish oil and two parts alcohol. In the line of baits, part-ridges, or birds of that class, are especially good and the trapper will do well with only a few feathers and the above scent. Fish flesh is hard to beat but ordinarily the trapper will have some difficulty in procuring it. However, many wilderness trappers ply their trade in localities where whitefish are netted by the natives and it will pay any man to get this kind of meat—the flesh is delicious to eat and the “insides” along with the head are hard to beat as baits for various animals.

Baits are placed in the back of the cubby house sets in such a position as to force the marten over the trap. I may state that traps are never covered when set for marten and they must be in excellent working order because these animals are extremely light-footed and will not spring a trap if at all resisting. That is why one cannot use a trap which

is hard to spring and there is no use in setting your traps so that a squirrel cannot throw them for in thus doing you are fixing them so that Mr. Marten can walk all over them without pinching his toes.

THE DEADFALL FOR MARTEN

A large number of very successful trappers employ the use of the deadfall to a great extent in marten trapping. A deadfall has some advantages that a steel trap does not have—it is not bothered by squirrels and is less apt to freeze up. In constructing the deadfall a pen is made much the same as an ordinary cubby house except that it must not be deep enough for the animal to get into and turn around before eating at the bait trigger. The log which is supposed to fall on the back of the animal is held in the desired position by a "Figure 4" trigger or similar arrangement, the trigger, with attached bait, should extend inside the pen about eight inches distant from the deadfall, thus when the animal gets at the bait and throws the trigger he will be well into the pen and the log will catch him across the back on its deadly descent. A shorter log is placed on the ground, directly in line with the path of the descending log, so that in falling the upper log will crush the victim between it and the lower one. An additional noteworthy effect of the deadfall lies in its humane feature of instantaneous killing—no long-lingering sufferer is the marten who runs afoul one of these contraptions.



THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN A FISHER, BUT IT HAPPENED TO BE A PORCUPINE

CAMPING ON THE TRAIL OF A MARTEN TRIBE

One of the most efficient ways to trap martens is to take a good dog team, load up an outfit of grub, blankets and traps, and follow a group of martens until they are cleaned up. This entails considerable hardship and I wouldn't advise any but the most experienced woodsmen to tackle it. It means camping under brush shelters when it is bitterly cold and of abandoning everything that marks for comfort in camping. The best time of the year to trap martens is along in February and we often have some of our bitterest weather at this time.

Where a large number of trappers fail in getting martens is during the cold periods when the average man prefers to stay in camp. This will not do, for martens are impervious to cold weather and will often travel extensively at that time. Whenever a storm clears away, the trapper should immediately go over his lines and fix all traps, for then the animals are apt to travel a great deal.

TRAPPING THE FISHER

A fisher, contrary to the significance of name, is not a water animal; his habits are practically identical with the marten. He is a much larger animal, being about the size of a small fox but with a less bushy tail. There is some resemblance between a large fisher and a small silver gray fox, the similarity being in the grayish black effect. The fisher is one of the most wicked animals, when it comes to fighting a trap, that I have ever had anything to do with—he will struggle until too exhausted to move.

There is one striking difference in the natures of the two animals; the marten, as I said, being clan-nish, while the fisher prefers to travel in solitude. Rarely indeed will one see where the fishers travel in pairs. Fishers seems to be very slow at increasing in numbers and year after year I have noted a few tracks in a certain district; seemingly no more or no less as the seasons roll by. The trapping of fishers must therefore be merely incidental in the average trapper's scheme of things—rarely will he get more than one or two in a single season.

Most of my fisher catches have been made in traps set for other animals; thus, last season in traps set around a bear carcass that I had previously shot, I took one of the largest fishers or "pecans" I ever saw.

In making sets for martens one may include the possibility of taking an odd fisher by setting the small traps with a balance or spring pole, an arrangement whereby the animal, after being caught, releases a pole that hoists him clear of the ground. Here even a powerful animal like the fisher is unable to effect his escape. A fact that I failed to mention in regard to marten trapping lies in the tendency of mice to chew at the frozen carcasses of these little furbearers, thus damaging the fur. By employing the pole hoist one swings the marten clear of the ground where mice are not so apt to do any damage.

The deadfall is also effective in capturing the fisher but should be built on a somewhat larger scale than the one used for martens. If the steel trap is used for the especial purpose of taking the fisher it should be at least a No. 2 in size. I have

lost these valuable furbearers through them getting into small marten traps, set in the usual fashion, and escaping with the loss of a toe or two.

The tyro may have some trouble in telling a fisher track from the various other kinds—it is made much the same as a marten track, though considerably larger. At times, however, the fisher will walk real slow, making a track not unlike that of a small fox. One thing you may depend on—if you see fisher tracks in the same place two or three times, you may go to the trouble of setting special traps for him as he is more than likely to return.

CHAPTER XI

THE OTTER AND WOLVERINE

SOME may wonder why I have placed the trapping of the otter and wolverine under the same heading. I merely do so on account of the scarcity of both these animals and not because there is any possible connection in the methods of trapping the two—one is strictly a water animal and the other prefers good dry land. Yet, despite the fact that otters are more at home in water, I have known instances where they traveled amazing distances overland in going from one stream or lake to another.

The otter belongs to a rather isolated class—he looks something like a mink but is more thick-set and has a different head and tail. The otter is the most powerful swimmer of all our water animals and is active enough to be able to catch fish with ease. His skin is so loose that he can virtually “turn inside his own coat.” A good sized otter would not total three feet in length but his stretched pelt often goes considerably over five feet.

The otter has a peculiar seal in the imprint of the foot and one that is not readily confused with the track of any animal. The feet are partly webbed as an aid to swimming and his legs are real short and powerful. The tail is broad across the root but tapers gradually toward the end, serving him well as a rudder. Otters are exceedingly sportive and have

slides along river banks for the satisfying of their playful instincts. They will spend hours at these slides, climbing up the steep banks and throwing themselves down the incline in a manner that speaks volumes in vouching for the enjoyment they get from the exercise.

Shortly after the freeze-up of the streams in late fall the otters amuse themselves by sliding on the smooth ice. Their method of locomotion is to run a few steps and then throw themselves forward on bellies, sliding several yards through the force gained in running. Although the otter travels unusually fast in water they often choose the slower method of traveling alongshore, a fact that works to advantage for the trapper.

The fur of the otter is not very long but is thick and of a very fine texture. Like the beaver he has really two coats, an inner and outer fur. The outer furs are coarser than the inside and are generally plucked from the pelt, in the process of manufacture, leaving what is known as "plucked otter," a soft fur so short and thick as to resemble plush.

The otter home is generally in burrows in the sandy banks bordering streams where fish are plentiful. The otter is a great traveler and will cover amazing distances in his rounds. In keeping track of the going and coming of a pair of otters, one summer on the Baptiste river, I found that they would be absent from a certain locality for a period of three weeks, suddenly returning and making a stay of several days. Again they would disappear, and sometimes were gone so long that I was inclined to believe they had left the country for good.

The otter and fisher are in the same class in one respect—very seldom do any number of them haunt a given locality. The otter is of an exceedingly retiring disposition and will rarely be found close to civilization. It is strange to think that some wild animals actually seem to enjoy living in a civilized country, while others, like the otter, must have unlimited freedom.

THE OTTER'S FRIENDS AND FOES

I remember once of reading a fantastical yarn which had as its strong point the instinct of an old gray otter for killing beavers. It seems to be quite a popular idea to have certain wild animals endowed with traits absolutely foreign to their real nature. It seems to me that all wild animals are interesting enough, when viewed in their true light, without going to the trouble to tell a lot of lies regarding their habits. Otters and beavers get along very well together and if there are any of the former animals in the vicinity of beaver dams they are certain to visit them regularly. I do not mean to say that the otter and beaver have anything in common, unless it is their natural love for good fresh water, but at the same time they are far from being deadly foes.

One instance in particular comes to my mind illustrating the point just set forth. On Jackfish lake there was a very large beaver house but at the time to which I allude it was occupied by only one old beaver. This beaver had patched up the old lodge and put in a small cache for the winter and just when he got things nicely fixed I happened along that way and noticed where some animal had

dug a hole in from the outside above the surface of the frozen lake. Digging a hole of this sort, and thus exposing his home to the elements, was absolutely foreign to the beaver's nature and for some time I was puzzled. The next trip around the lake, where I was running a lynx line, I noticed the hole had been closed up again and from the nature of the work I could easily see that a beaver had done the job from the inside.

Imagine my surprise when on the third trip I found the hole in the beaver house again opened and, stranger still, an otter trail in the new snow leading from the direction of the Little Smoky river, a distance of eight miles overland. The otter had simply chosen the easiest way of getting into the frozen lake by digging in through the beaver house; not with the intent of battling with the old beaver but in order to get at the fish in the lake. The beaver, not liking the idea of an OPEN DOOR to the outside world, merely replastered the hole each time it was broken through.

As I said, this particular otter had traveled the distance of eight miles overland in order to reach Jackfish lake. This is more to be wondered at when one considers that the otter travels very slowly via land—his legs are very short and it is necessary for him to go around obstructions of any size, rather than to attempt climbing over them.

THE OTTER IS SOME TRAVELER

Another instance where the otter made his mark as an extensive overland traveler happened some miles north of Jackfish lake during the course of another season. This was just after the first snow

of any account. A fur trader and I were trapping in various directions from his headquarters on the Iosegun river, just west of its conjunction with the Little Smoky. One of our shorter side lines was in the direction of Buck lake, some six miles east. On one of our trips we noticed a trail furrowed deep in the snow, a fact which instantly marked it as that left by an otter. Traveling must have been exceedingly hard for that otter, for the snow was a good foot in depth. We marked where he entered Buck lake via a hole through the ice at the inlet and later on caught him at this place. Where the otter travels these trails more than once makes a good place to trap them as it is far easier for them to follow the same track instead of breaking a fresh one each time.

DISAPPEARANCE OF OTTER DURING COLD WEATHER

A thing that puzzles a number of trappers is the disappearance of otters around Christmas time. I will admit that this had me "buffaloed" for some time but the answer is natural enough when one comes to know the truth. The otter depends almost entirely on fish for food and as long as he is in a locality where there are lots of these finny "denizens" he has no call to be roaming all over the country. It must be remembered that even the swifter streams of this cold region freeze over by the coming of the New Year and what is more natural than to assume that our friend, the otter, is compelled to suffer confinement in an ice-bound prison for a couple of months or so! This is actually what happens and the otter, during this period, has a home



A "CATCH" OF J. C. WATERSTREET'S, ALBERTA.
WOLVERINE IN CENTER

much the same as that occupied by the bank beaver, that is, a burrow in the bank with its entrance under water. He is yet capable of traveling great distances under the ice and pursues his fish chasing with great gusto.

SOME SETS FOR TRAPPING THE OTTER

Land sets may be included in the fall program as follows: Along streams frequented by otter select small sand bars; bury the bait (rotten fish is very good) and set a couple of traps immediately over the stuff. Some paper should be placed over the outspread jaws of each trap, just large enough to cover nicely, and sand sifted lightly over the top. Care should be taken to select a spot where the sand is real dry—otherwise the trap will freeze solid. This set is no good after the snow comes, but up to that time is excellent for anything from a mink to a wolf.

Sets may be invented on an old beaver dam, where the otter is apt to travel. If there is much chance of catching one of the animals at such places you will invariably see where the otter has passed over the top of the dam, generally through a sort of trough. In trapping the otter where it is not possible to drown the animal (as described for beaver) it is necessary to either stake the traps or fasten them to a heavy clog. A strong trap, No. 3 in size, should always be used, as the otter struggles savagely and a small or weak trap would hold him but a very short time indeed.

A good set may be employed near the shore of a lake where otters travel. Out from the shore a few yards fix a platform or support of forked stakes

so that a trap, when rested on it, will be covered by four inches or so of water. Take another and longer dead stick and drive it into the mud so that it hangs over the trap and suspend a fish bait at the top. The otter in reaching for the bait will get his foot into the trap.

Along smaller streams where otters travel frequently a good set is made by narrowing down the channel with sticks and brush so as to leave a small passage. Here, on a platform as described above, set your trap. In case you are trapping for otter in the vicinity of the beaver's haunts it is advisable to make a drowning set in each place, otherwise you are apt to get a beaver's foot for your troubles.

Ordinary pen sets are often employed along banks of streams and lakes and when baited with fish are quite likely to prove a success. I have never found the otter a particularly wary animal, yet I have no doubt that if one escaped from a trap he would prove a very different creature to take in a similar set. Otters may be taken under the ice by making a V-shaped pen of stones and baiting with fish. Blind sets are sometimes used in "cut-offs," that is, where otters are in the habit of going overland where streams make wide horseshoe bends.

Fish is the natural food of the otter and I don't believe there is any other kind of flesh half so attractive when used as bait. Some trappers claim to have used beaver castors for scent but personally I never had much faith in it. Possibly an otter might be attracted by it but more from curiosity than anything.

THE WOLVERINE

Very few trappers, save those who have had extensive experience in the wilderness, are unfortunate enough to include this "critter" in their list of possible catches. The wolverine is a combination composed of one part bear, one part skunk and the rest all devil; the latter proportion depending on the individual and his special cunning. He has a heavy, bear-like body, a more rounded head than a bear; large feet, strong white claws and a short, bushy tail. In color the wolverine is rather dark or blackish although generally a grizzled color on back of neck and head. Feet are black and a broad, dirty, yellow band begins just behind the shoulders and runs along either side until joining at the rump. Sometimes the color is varied by irregular patches underneath, especially between forelegs and on throat.

A very representative name for the wolverine is the Indian "Carcajou" or "Indian Devil" and truly he is the most gluttonous and devilish animal in the north woods. Every family has its "black sheep" and the wolverine surely takes the cake! The only real good thing in connection with the wolverine is its scarcity; very seldom will the trapper be bothered with more than one or two wolverines.

The wolverine is a carnivorous animal and will feed on anything from insects, mice and reptiles, to a moose carcass. This makes it especially bad for the trapper as it will follow his trapline for miles, robbing the sets of every vestige of bait and often tearing valuable catches to worthless bits.

SOME WOLVERINE YARNS

No matter how bad an animal is naturally, someone is going to give him a coat of blacker dye; of no animal is this truer than the wolverine. I read one yarn where a wolverine was known to enter a trapper's cabin and steal his snowshoes. The trapper was fortunately able to secure another pair and took after the robber. While he prepared his meal over a campfire he carelessly left his rifle stuck in the snow some distance away and on later going over to pick it up, discovered that Mr. Wolverine had walked away with it!

Another yarn credits the animal with taking a rifle and biting the hammer off it. Still another told of how a wolverine took a certain man's traps and hung them all in one tree! Such yarns are amusing to say the least, especially to the authors of them.

SOME ACTUAL HAPPENINGS IN THE WRITER'S
EXPERIENCE

The worst things that a wolverine ever did to me fall far short of the calamities pictured above, yet I have had quite enough experience with the wolverine's devilish stunts that I am certainly willing to forego the pleasure of further acquaintance. I have had him tear a fifty-dollar marten skin to bits and take innumerable baits from my traps. Perhaps the most peculiar thing a wolverine ever did for me was to take a No. 2 Victor trap, attached to a sizeable toggle, a hundred yards from the marten pen where it had been placed, and leave it on a brush still SET. I never found that particular trap for some time after he got away with it and was

nursing the idea that some animal had got in it and escaped, when I finally discovered it.

The wolverine has a very bad habit of destroying meat, being able to climb fairly well he can reach most any "cache" the hunter is able to make. If he gets to a cache where there is more meat than his gluttonous appetite can make away with, he will take the rest of it away and make a cache of his own. He is such an inveterate wanderer that he will cover a large strip of country; his home generally being in a large burrow under windfalls or in some inaccessible place. He does not hibernate, as does the bear, but is often abroad in the worst of weather.

GETTING RID OF A PEST

The wolverine is apt to prove too much for the average tyro, he is a very cunning animal and has a great faculty for spying out sets made for his destruction. The same precaution must be used as if one were trapping for the wolf. In case a wolverine is making trips over your line at intervals, robbing the traps and the like, he may be fooled in this manner: Leave a squirrel, bird or the like in a trap set in the ordinary fashion, just as though caught naturally. Now carefully conceal two large, strong traps in front of the set and if our mutual foe is not too wise he will get in bad.

As a last resort the trapper may employ the use of poison—I do not advise of it ordinarily for the very good reason that one is apt to kill a lot of valuable furbearers that he knows not of. As I explained in the chapter on wolf trapping, poisoning in a place covered with brush or timber is not

advisable for the stricken animals are rarely discovered. If you can get a wolverine to tackle a larger bait, set out in the open like on a marsh or lake, then you can poison him readily and without endangering the loss of other and more valuable furbearers.

CHAPTER XII

THE BEAR FAMILY

BEARS in their various shades, sizes and habits, comprise one of the most interesting families of wild creatures. A bear is a bear, yet there are something like thirteen different species in Canada and Alaska. The average wilderness trapper will probably include the capture of a few bears in his yearly program, depending of course on the kind of country he happens to be in. The mere fact that a country happens to be wild does not vouch for its suitability to the bear family, on the other hand, bears will thrive surprisingly close to civilization, having a particular appetite for various tame fruits.

The most common variety is the black bear, and next in line is the brown fellow, and so closely allied are the two in habits it is generally conceded they belong to one and the same family. I can remember the time when I was deathly afraid of any kind of a bear, and I believe it is natural for the average person to feel this way. In latter years, however, I have come to know that bears of the commoner variety are about as harmless as one could well imagine; indeed the only experiences I have had with the grizzly proved that he was quite willing to keep out of my way.

WHEN IS A BEAR DANGEROUS?

The only time that black bears are dangerous is in case of a female with young, and then only in rare cases. Ordinarily a black she-bear will seek safety in flight and leave her cubs to fare for themselves, but once in a great while one is apt to run across a particularly "crusty" old dame who will show fight.

The grizzly is credited with far more savage notions than experience actually proves, nevertheless there are times when one should be mighty careful in tackling the animal. Unlike the black bear, the grizzly female is apt to dispute the right of anyone to her cubs. In the spring of the year an old male grizzly is apt to be unwilling to get out of one's path, especially in a tight place; this is probably due to his starved condition after a long season of hibernating. In rare cases I daresay this would apply equally to an old black bear.

HABITS OF BLACK BEAR

The bear belongs to the family of omnivores, that is, he will eat flesh and vegetables alike. Ordinarily he is fonder of fruits than a steady meat diet though being particularly fond of such small morsels as mice, toads, ants, bees and the like. On the borders of civilized communities bears often resort to the nefarious practice of stealing pigs, and once they get a taste of pork are sure to prove troublesome customers to the settler. However, they are generally fairly easy to capture; they may either be shot late in the evening or trapped with a suitable steel trap.

Despite their tendency to eat flesh, black bears will not remain in a country where the "berry crop" is poor, that is, the supply of natural fruits such as huckleberries, blueberries, cranberries and the like. I have noted this in particular the last few years—if we have a good crop of wild berries there are certain to be a fair number of bears about. This last season has been the poorest one, in the matter of wild fruits, since I have been in the country, and in line with what I said above, very few bears were about this past fall. Last season, that is, a year ago, there were a number of bears at various points on my traplines—this fall there were only one or two.

DENNING UP FOR WINTER

Dame Nature is a marvel at scheming; the bear is too big and clumsy for rustling enough small animals during the bitter cold months to keep himself alive—the berries are covered with snow and he would surely starve if forced to live as ordinary animals. But Nature has foreseen this inevitable result and granted the bear the privilege of hibernating. Some people can see so little of interest in nature; to me the working out of her plans seems far more wonderful than the most intricate piece of modern machinery. Every wild creature is fashioned to fit a certain groove; it takes ages to complete the slightest change in Nature's order—the most lasting piece of man's handicraft must disappear in a comparatively short time.

The time for bears to hibernate depends entirely on the climate and individual season; some falls I have know the bears to den up as early as Octo-

ber and again, in the same country, have seen their tracks late in November. If the season is a particularly poor one in regard to natural berry crops, Bruin may be forced to forage for a longer time than if food is plentiful enough for him to early put on sufficient fat to carry him through a long season. Great layers of fat are to Bruin what a great reserve of power is to a piece of machinery—he gradually draws on this fat for sustenance throughout the dormant stage, naturally the better shape he is in at the start of the hibernating period, the better he will be, as to physical condition, when he wakes from the long sleep.

The exact state he is in, while hibernating, depends somewhat on the nature of the weather; during a protracted warm spell in January or February the bear is quite apt to stir about in his den or even come out for a short time. This is especially true of the grizzly. Under ordinary conditions black bears in this part of the world (about 55th parallel, north latitude) will leave their dens permanently for that season anytime after the first of April.

THE BEAR'S WINTER HOME

Lots of people have strange ideas as to the nature of the bear's den; this is not to be wondered at as the real thing is something of a curiosity. Bears differ in tastes, like people; some will get along with any sort of a shelter while others must have a real cozy den. The average person might hunt assiduously, through a country where bears were known to hibernate, without discovering a single bear den. This is because bears will ordinarily seek the most inaccessible places to hole up. I have



BEAR CUBS—CAPTURED BY LAWYER BROTHERS NORTHWEST OF EDSON, ALBERTA.
PHOTO BY R. W. COZENS

seen bear dens that were nothing but hollowed places under heavy trees or windfalls; again I have unearthed Bruin in regular burrows.

The exact locality of a bear den is mighty hard to discover, even to an experienced woodsman, unless aided by the right breed of dog, or I should say, a dog trained properly. I have discovered them by chance in the depth of winter; in such instance the presence is always betrayed by a round hole in the snow, heavily fringed with frost. In case of an extra deep den, lined with grass or moss, you may be sure that a female is its tenant and that she will give birth to young any time after March. This is a marvelous fact in itself—the birth of young while the mother is yet in a semi-dormant state.

Dens which are merely hollows under logs and roots are generally occupied by hardy old males; they depend on snow to make such makeshifts warm. The female, with an eye to the welfare of her expected offspring, wears her toenails down pretty well in making a comfortable “hospital” or “maternity home” for herself. People who are often nonplussed by the actions of wild creatures do so because of a lack of sympathy or understanding with Nature’s children; in order to account for certain things the nature student must imagine himself in the very position of the creature he is studying, nor must he forget the force of circumstances to which all living things are subject.

BEARDING THE BEAR IN HIS DEN

Shooting a poor defenseless creature, such as the bear is when dormant, may seem little short of murder; but I will say that in order to get to

the shooting stage entails a lot of work and excitement and the man who hunts down one of these animals is entitled to some respect as a hunter; this especially if he does not employ the use of bear dogs. The average trapper will welcome the addition of a bear hide to his collection and as I am dealing with trapping as a profession, I will describe the methods used in hunting this animal in late fall when the pelt first becomes prime.

Two men can best hunt together for reasons which will be explained. Armed with rifles and belt axes the couple should start bear hunting shortly after the first fall of snow. By making detours of all heavily wooded regions, in a fairly high chain of hills the trappers are sure to run across a fresh bear track. Then the fun commences, its duration depending on the sporting instinct of the hunters, coupled with the circumstances, as to how far Bruin is ahead of them and whether he is going toward a permanent den.

If Bruin is headed directly for his wintering quarters, he may travel in a fairly straight line, starting to wander and back track when within a comparatively short distance of the object of his journey. But, if merely ambling about, looking for stray pieces of food, the bear is apt to give a couple of hunters more than they bargained for. In the first place he will choose thickets and underbrush to travel in which are apt to prove mighty discouraging to woodsmen, after going through a half mile or so of this stuff he will head for a region where windfalls are thick enough to calm the most enthusiastic of hunters. He delights especially in walking logs or under heavy trees where the snow

has failed to cover the ground and where, consequently, he will make no tracks, leaving the hunters in a baffled predicament for a space.

Here is where the superiority of two hunters over a single man is asserted; while one keeps a general line on the tracks the other can skirt the edge of particularly hard going, and relieve the first at the next bad place. Again, the second man is exceedingly useful in hunting out tracks when lost temporarily and in keeping a sharp lookout when nearing the quarry, while his mate unravels a veritable tangle of back tracks. Invariably, when Bruin approaches a spot where he intends to lie down, even if but for a short time, he will back track and stop in such a position that he can see anything that happens to follow him in. Under such conditions, especially if in a tangle of heavy down timber, the hunters will do well to keep a sharp lookout, for such actions generally indicate that Bruin is near his permanent winter's headquarters. Even then, if not particularly careful, the hunters are apt to find an empty den, for Bruin is not yet in a state of helplessness and is more or less on the lookout for enemies. In case the hunters are fortunate enough to catch Bruin napping, I will say that they have a fairly sizeable job on hand, particularly if the hole happens to be a deep one—bears are surprisingly heavy!

EXPERIENCES WITH BEARS

I may say that I have had some very interesting experiences with Bruin, having lived in a country more or less populated by such animals most of my life. On the west coast there are yet a fair

number of bears and where I have been for the past seven years they are about as thick as anywhere, I guess. My first real experience happened the spring after I struck this country. The preceding fall, on entering the wilds, I had located in a vacant cabin at Kimberly or Jackfish lake. There was quite a bit of dirt on the floor of the cabin, having filtered down through the roof poles, and in this dirt were the unmistakable tracks of a large bear. At that time, late October, the tracks looked disconcertingly fresh and my pard and I were almost afraid to take chances of quarreling with another lodger. Nevertheless, we fixed the cabin up and were somewhat relieved when no bear demanded to be let in.

With the coming of the New Year my partner left me and I trapped alone for the remainder of the season. I was a good many miles from the nearest living soul and at times I must confess I was a little "fed up" with the solitude. When the first signs of spring were in evidence I spent a great deal of the time camping out under brush shelters. I wasn't very old and every time I happened to see fresh bear tracks around I began to speculate on what the critter might do to me in case of an attack by night.

One morning, while camping on Marshead Creek, I awoke from a fitful sleep to find a heavy, wet snow falling. My shelter wasn't waterproof and in a short time I commenced longing for the warmth and comfort of my little cabin at Kimberly, about eight miles distant. The upshot of it was that I hit across country and in three hours arrived at my cabin, wet and miserably cold. In a very short

time, however, I had the place real cozy and with a good mess of beans tucked under my belt began to feel drowsy, and lying down on the bunk was soon in the land of Nod. It had been so warm inside I had been compelled to leave the door partly open and had tied my big pack dog near it.

Suddenly I was awakened by a short, sharp bark from my faithful friend, and knowing that something was about, grabbed my rifle on the way to the door. A black bear stood not thirty yards from the door and I shot him in his tracks. This same bear had been to the cabin previously, during my absence, and had tried to get in through the heavily barred windows and had also attempted coming down the stovepipe hole, "a la Santa Claus."

GIVING THE GRIZZLY PLENTY OF ROAD ROOM

Between the Baptiste river country, where I was trapping that spring, and civilization there was a high range of mountains. I had heard of a fur buyer who was willing to come out to the Athabaska and take all the fur we trappers could muster, so I decided to make a trip in and see if he would return with me. On the high range there was yet quite a bit of snow and ice. I left the Athabaska river before daylight one morning and as I intended to make as quick a trip as possible I went real light, carrying no blankets or grub—only a light axe and a lighter lunch, hoping to make the nearest stopping place that night, 43 miles distant.

I traveled the Athabaska valley flats for near on to a couple of miles; leaving the valley I started a four-mile climb over a low range of the Moose Mountains, then down the other side into the valley of



BEAR HIDE IN PACK SACK CARRIED FIFTY MILES BY THIS DOG

Pine Creek. It was just getting real daylight when I commenced climbing Breakneck and at this altitude I noticed where it had apparently snowed but a few hours previous.

Going along at a fairly good lick I was suddenly brought to a halt by the appearance of tracks in the trail, tracks which I soon made out to be those of a very large bear, undoubtedly a grizzly and leading in the same direction I had to go. For the space of several moments I stood, undecided whether to take chances by going ahead or to beat a hasty retreat. I examined the tracks closely and they certainly were far too fresh to suit me. At length I determined to move slowly ahead, which I did, keeping a mighty sharp lookout in every direction and with one eye always on a tree which I might climb. In this fashion I had proceeded about half a mile—still the tracks led on straight up the trail, and I had come to a section of the trail which wound along the side of the mountain and where there was scanty growth of any sort save clumps of alders; rounding a sharp turn I came practically face to face with what seemed to me the largest bear on the American continent! Believe me, I was scared, nor am I ashamed to admit it, but luckily for me Bruin moved off into the brush down the mountainside and I hastily made myself scarce. Incidentally, the following spring a friend of mine, Mr. T. B. Murphy, shot a large grizzly within a couple of miles of that very spot; undoubtedly it was the same bear as there weren't so many grizzlies about then.

TRAPPING THE BEAR

In trapping the ordinary black bear nothing smaller than a No. 5 Newhouse should be used. I have seen several black bears that were mighty big animals and even the smallest one will put up some fight. The ordinary method of making sets is to construct a V-shaped pen of good strong stakes or logs, say about four feet high and three feet deep, putting a good bait in the back and setting the trap in the entrance. If the opening of the pen is too wide it may be narrowed down with guide sticks, so as to force the animal into the trap. The top of the pen should be covered with brush or Bruin is likely to go over the top instead of through the front door!

A steel trap should never be fastened solid, if set for a bear; rather it should be attached to a good strong clog about four inches in diameter and eight feet long. Some bears are savage enough to chew a pole of this size all to bits; this difficulty may be overcome as follows: Take a handful of medium-sized nails and drive them well into the clog at various places—this will soon discourage the most ferocious set of teeth.

Bears are fond of sweets but the ordinary trapper won't have much of this stuff to spare; I have found beaver meat and fish quite good enough to answer all requirements in the line of bear baits.

In setting steel traps of the size required for bears one should always make the set so conspicuous that anyone happening along would know the nature of the contrivance. For that reason the trapper should NEVER make a blind set with a bear trap, not in a single instance can you be certain that no

one will happen that way. I came so close to shooting a man once, simply because I was dead certain there wasn't such a thing as another man in the country, I have always been mighty particular about endangering another's life through carelessness.

Should the wilderness trapper, through carelessness on his own or another's part, be unfortunate enough to get caught in a bear trap, he has but one hope of release if caught securely. That is to build a fire and heat the end of the trap springs until the temper is destroyed. I have no doubt that it would require a great deal of fortitude to pull through a case of this kind but one should never die without trying to help himself.

DEADFALLS FOR BEARS

The first time I ever built a deadfall a bear threw it three times in succession without getting caught permanently; this was due to a lack of sufficient weight on the "fall" or killing log. There are a few simple rules to follow in making a deadfall for bears: Don't make pen more than two feet wide; it should be three feet deep, that is, from the path of the descending log to the trigger. In other words, figure things out so that the bear can't get in far enough to turn around and so that he will be well under the log when it falls. Have your trigger fairly sensitive and positive in its action; try it out a number of times and make sure that no upright spindles will get in line with the falling log and block its descent. Cover the top well so that Bruin can't get at the bait from that section, and above all, weight your log very heavily! If the bear

is not killed almost instantly he will squirm around and get out.

MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS

As a matter of fact the value of a bear hide is hardly in comparison to the amount of labor required to get it into shape; a good bear hide in this country will not bring more than ten or twelve dollars and they are heavy, awkward things to handle. If taken in the fall a bear will be far more valuable to the trapper, in the matter of fat taken from his carcass, than his hide amounts to. I have rendered as much as forty pounds of pure lard from one bear carcass—that amount is easily worth fifteen dollars in the trapper's country.

The average person will soon tire of bear meat; it is too fat and rich to suit me. Young cubs in the fall are especially fat and oily and positively sickening after a few meals. Perhaps some persons who are particularly fond of 'possum and the like do appreciate this sort of meat, but not for yours truly. Bear grease is recommended as a hair restorer; personally I never have been scared quite bad enough to lose my "wool" so I can't vouch for the tonsorial qualities of the stuff. The Chinese value bear galls as medicine. I packed one in a bottle for over a hundred miles once and sold it for eighty-five cents! Poor business, I'll say.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MUSKRAT—KING PIN

THE muskrat has well been termed the "king pin of the fur industry." One would naturally suppose that such valuable animals as fisher, marten, silver fox and the like would represent a greater sum total than the catch of muskrats. However, more money is required to finance the handling of 'rat skins than any other single class, skunk being next in total value.

The body of the muskrat, exclusive of the tail, is about a foot in length; the ordinary color is brown on the back and ash underneath. Like the beaver, the 'rat's front feet are small in comparison to the hind ones; the latter being partly webbed as an aid to swimming. The tail is long and tapered, covered with scales and thin hair, and makes a very good rudder for the muskrat.

THE HABITS OF MUSKRATS

Muskrats feed on roots and grass chiefly, although they will take to vegetables, like apples, carrots, parsnips, corn, with great enjoyment, and are even credited with eating clams when other foods are scarce. Their natural habitat is in shallow ponds or along sluggish streams and in this particular country are generally found in beaver dams. The muskrat either builds a dome-shaped house of grass and reeds, with the entrance under water, or lives



MUSKEG RIVER, GRANDE PRAIRIE TRAIL—A GOOD MINK AND MUSKRAT STREAM

in a burrow along the bank. From six to ten muskrats ordinarily live in the same house. In case of living in the burrow the tunnel is enlarged at a point above the level of the water, and the living-room thus formed is lined with grass.

The muskrat is more or less nocturnal in habits, at the same time it is often seen throughout the day, most often in early morning and toward evening. In the fall 'rats are especially busy in building homes for the winter. In this respect they are second only to the beaver, but while the latter animal builds dams and lays in a supply of food for the winter, the 'rat is able to get his food right from the bottom of the ponds, under the ice, as he needs it. Just after the first freezing weather, if not attended by snow, one can mark the course of the 'rat as he swims under the clear ice.

TRAPPING THE MUSKRAT

Notwithstanding the 'rat is such a common animal there is quite a bit of real science in connection with trapping him. The 'rat is the worst animal for "wringing off," that is, twisting his foot off and leaving it in the trap, the trapper will have to deal with. No matter what kind of steel traps one employs of the variety which take hold of the foot only, a certain amount of precaution must be taken or the trapper will get feet only! The weight of an ordinary No. 1 trap is quite sufficient to drown the biggest 'rat if properly set, but the bigger the trap the more apt the catch is to escape IF not set right.

The drowning stake or drowning wire may be used to make sure of the catch, or even if the trap is staked out far enough in deep water so that the

animal will twist around it he will soon drown. Any number of good sets may be originated, by which the weight of an ordinary trap will drown a 'rat; in all cases avoid setting traps to stakes where water is very shallow or where the animal can twist around anything and wring off before drowning. If caught by the hind foot the 'rat is far less apt to escape than if captured by the forefoot; this is due to the stronger bones and muscles in the hind foot.

FLOATING LOG SET

This is perhaps the best set a wilderness trapper can use. Take a sizeable dry log and cut several shallow notches in it, just wide enough for the trap you are using. Set traps in each notch, cover lightly with moss or grass and shove out into the stream a ways, mooring to shore by means of wire. It is best to first try the log in water, observing which side floats uppermost, otherwise it is apt to roll in the water and upset your traps. Each trap chain is secured to the side of the log so that the muskrat when trapped will jump into the water where his struggles soon end.

I have used a slightly different form of this set in a civilized community by substituting flat boards in place of the log. Strips may be nailed across the board, allowing a space just large enough for a trap between two of these pieces. Baits of various kinds can be placed on this floating set.

MISCELLANEOUS SETS

Another log set is made by cutting a notch into a log that slopes into the water, the notch being a few inches under water. Bait may be placed on

the log above the trap. The use of wading boots prove a great aid in muskrat trapping; unfortunately the man who traps the wilds can hardly expect to carry such heavy things around with him. Consequently he will be wise to make a small raft, as advised in the chapter on beaver trapping. This enables him to locate splendid places for setting traps that he would otherwise be unable to get at.

All along the banks will be noticed signs where the 'rats have been working; every log or stone that projects above the water is sure to be visited by a passing 'rat now and again. Certain spots are readily located where the 'rat does his feeding, these may be discovered through the presence of clipped grass and weeds floating on the water.

'Rats often travel from one pond to another and their unmistakable trails may be seen through the reeds and grass. On the beaver ponds where 'rats frequent any number of ideal sets may be located, there being one drawback to trapping in such places—beavers are apt to get into the small traps.

TRAPPING THROUGH ICE

To make a success of 'rat trapping after ice forms the hustler will get out just before freeze-up and stake the various runways that lead into the banks. Taking a dry stake the trapper shoves it down close enough to the runway to mark its exact location; when the ice forms he can cut through it and place his traps in the desired spots. This simple precaution will mark the difference between failure and success.

Muskrat houses should never be broken into, besides being against the law it destroys the animal's



Floating log set for muskrat and mink.

natural shelter with disastrous results to the whole colony. However, there is no harm in trapping 'rats in their feed houses, small mounds of moss or like stuff, shoved up through the ice as a sort of shelter for the animal while feeding.

In conclusion of my dealings with the muskrat I will say that they are very sociable little creatures, being on excellent terms with the beaver and I have seen them enter the occupied lodge of the latter animal many times.

MINK TRAPPING

The mink is a long slender animal and very active, both on land and in water. It varies from a light brown to a dark brown in color, being much the same size as a marten.

The mink is carnivorous and is particularly fond of fish, mice, birds, etc. They may be trapped by good water sets or on dry land in ordinary pen sets, covering the trap with feathers. I have occasionally caught mink in muskrat sets and have also taken them in sand bar sets as described for otter. Last fall I set a trap on the dirt banking against my cabin wall and caught a fine mink in place of the mountain rat I was after. I always throw refuse in one spot not far distant from my cabins and a trap set in such places has accounted for a number of mink and skunk.

In the winter time the mink frequently enters the water of a lake or pond by digging in through muskrat houses. The mink has been credited with killing muskrats, personally I have never seen anything by which I might prove this assertion, although I do know that muskrat flesh is a very good bait

for mink. The wilderness trapper should experience very little difficulty in mastering mink trapping, at least enough so as to suit his requirements.

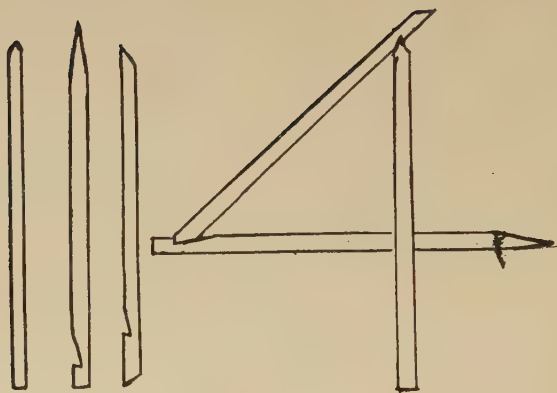
WHITE WEASEL OR ERMINE

This is the smallest of all American carnivorous creatures. What he lacks in size is more than made up in ferocity and bloodthirstiness; the weasel will kill merely for the joy of slaughter.

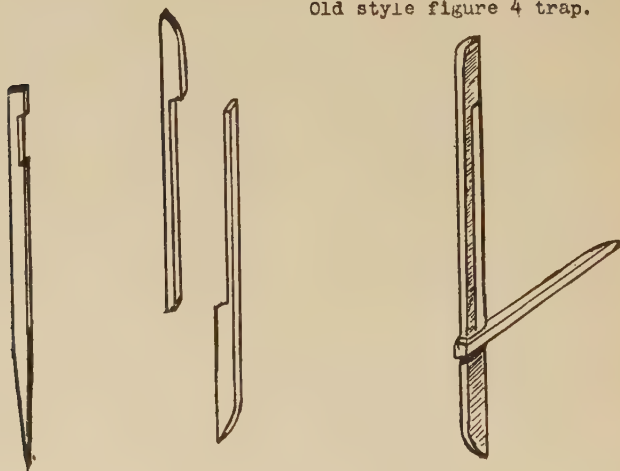
Weasels are very bold, inquisitive little creatures and will often hiss and squeak at a trapper when surprised at a feast. They make their dens in any convenient hollow under roots and the like—very often usurping the winter quarters of the red squirrel. They are quicker than a flash, always seeking to grab their intended victim by the throat where a quick bite generally severs the main artery or jugular. In case of a larger animal, like the rabbit, the weasel will hang on as long as the victim breathes.

The average wilderness trapper does not trap the weasel intentionally, but relies on his small traps (like those set for mink and marten) to account for a number of the little white animals during the course of the season. However, there are certain seasons when it will pay the wilderness trapper to look after this particular branch of the trapping game. As a rule, weasels and martens are fairly plentiful, in good marten country, of course, at the same time, but often the trapper will be after other game where weasels are likewise plentiful. For weasel trapping one should use at least a hundred small traps and the more often one attends to them the more money he will make, naturally.

Any ordinary cubby house set, baited with rabbit,



Old style figure 4 trap.



Another trigger for setting deadfalls.

bird or the like, will suffice in capturing the weasel; one should be very careful to have the passage into the pen narrow enough so that the spread jaws of the trap fill it, otherwise the weasel may step around it. It is sometimes better to suspend bait directly of the trap and the animal is certain to get into it in reaching upward. For scent I have never used anything to beat fish oil—indeed, fish of any kind makes the very best bait for weasel. This animal is very much in evidence around farms (much to the poultry man's chagrin, for he is a terror in a hen house) and many ideal sets may be located about stacks and out-houses. However, my treatise deals with the professional side of trapping in the wilds, so I will pass this phase by.

Weasels are very prolific and in the more favorable years have two and three litters a year and a half dozen or so in a litter. This explains why the trapper will get so many small weasels—these are the young of late litters. Often weasels will have yellow "stains" on the back; this affects the value.

Weasels disappear at intervals much the same as the marten; incidentally they are very scarce this year. This is merely another marvelous provision in Nature's scheme of things and amounts to this—whenever any kind or class of wild creatures becomes thick enough to endanger their welfare SOMETHING happens to reduce their numbers. The old idea that creatures migrated instead of dying off does not hold true in a large number of cases—generally they become diseased, either dying off in large numbers or refraining from breeding for a few seasons.

CHAPTER XIV

TRACKS AND TRACKING

TRACKING BIG GAME ANIMALS

THE amateur trapper or tracker should first experiment on the larger animals—the moose being especially good to practice on. I can well remember the time when I couldn't tell the difference between the tracks made by a moose and domestic cow and today it is very seldom that I see a track of any nature that fools me long. I do not mean to say this in boasting, rather as an encouragement to the rank beginner, for practice can accomplish wonders and that is what we all lack at one time.

By glancing at the illustration one can get the idea of what a moose track looks like—it is much longer and sharper in proportion to that of the domestic cow. The track of the bull moose is somewhat larger and hardly as sharp as that of the cow moose. The dew claws, that make the imprint, in soft going, just back of the heel, are a great aid to the moose and deer; they prevent slipping on muddy slopes and prevent the animals from sinking too deep in mirey places such as muskegs and swamps. It is a fact that a large bull moose can get through swamps and the like where a domestic animal will mire helplessly.

Tracking any animal on dry land is apt to be a great problem to the amateur, for that reason I

advise trying it out on the moose, following tracks for a short distance whenever you get the chance and seeking to determine the age of the tracks in each instance. A fresh track in moss will be considerably deeper than an old one made by the same animal, this is due to the tendency of the vegetation to spring back to its normal position. On hard, stony ground tracks may only be noted by displaced gravel or faint scratches on larger stones. The amount of disturbance made by any large animal depends on its speed, that is, whether walking slowly, trotting or running. A moose when only slightly alarmed will trot off majestically; if really scared he will run for a mile or two and his tracks will be in scattering groups from ten to fifteen feet apart.

In tracking a wounded moose the trapper should never rush the animal, give it time to lie down and chances are if it is hit half way fairly it will never get up. In case a moose is followed and it does get up after lying down two or three times, all hopes in regard to securing the animal may be given up. Various rules have been set down by hunters whereby one may tell from the actions of a big game animal exactly where it is hit. I don't place much confidence in anything of this sort for the very good reason that I have seen too many animals hit with bullets fired from various sorts of rifles. I have seen a moose fall stone dead and never quiver, when shot in the shoulder with my .280 Ross; I have seen a bull, apparently shot in the same place, take several steps before taking the count, and again I have seen a bull rear up on his hind legs and fall over backward into the Athabaska, when shot the third time with a .405 Winchester.

The thing that fools the average amateur tracker, in following wounded game, is when the wounded animal quits bleeding and gets in with another animal of same class, resulting in a confusion of tracks that is truly perplexing. In order to avoid this chance of becoming "stalled" the tracker should take particular notice of the style in which the wounded animal walks, carefully noting whether he favors a certain limb or goes around obstructions instead of leaping over them.

TRACKING MOOSE IN SNOW

Obviously this is easier than tracking them on dry land, at the same time there are certain instances when it is well-nigh impossible to figure accurately on the age of the tracks. For instance let us say a couple of inches of snow has fallen during the forepart of the week and no further precipitation occurs for the balance of that period. Toward the latter part of the week there will be so many tracks that one will not only have a hard time in figuring on the number of animals thereabouts but it will be extremely difficult to know just when the tracks were made.

The moose has a surprising range; he will be in a certain locality today and tomorrow may be twenty miles away. A certain rancher in the neighboring province to the east raised a couple of moose from the time they were "youngsters." One summer he turned them loose, soliciting the aid of the entire community in protecting them and keeping tab on their habits. Nearly every day he received telephone messages from parties, telling where his pets had been seen at such and such a time—he was thus able

to prove to his entire satisfaction that it was nothing uncommon for the moose to travel thirty miles in a day or night.

The amateur tracker, in looking for moose, will do well to get out bright and early, as the animal is generally through feeding about nine o'clock, and once he has lain down is very difficult to approach. Let us say the tracker is out real early and he strikes a moose track that he is certain of being fresh. Does it not sound reasonable to presume that he has a good chance of getting close to his quarry? Well, it depends on the character of the tracks which may only be determined by following them a ways. If the tracks lead away in a comparatively straight line one may as well go right after them, for as long as a moose (or deer) is walking as though intending to go somewhere the hunter will have a hard time to keep up. As soon as the tracker reaches a point where the animal has been standing he should make careful note of whether the creature has been merely looking over his back track or has stopped to feed. A little examination of the bushes within reach will soon settle the question, for in case he has been feeding there will be evidence of where the buds have been freshly clipped from the boughs. As soon as the animal stops to feed he will wander back and forth from bush to bush, thus delaying his progress so that the tracker may approach. Then caution should take the place of speed!

TRACKING THE DEER

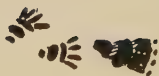
The same principles explained above apply to deer tracking, still there are several differences in



MOOSE



BEAR



BEAVER



MUSKRAT.

Showing how tail drags.

the habits of deer and moose which will have a decided effect on the "still hunting" of either. In the spring of the year one is apt to confuse the tracks made by moose calves with those left by a deer, being strikingly similar in size and shape, but a little investigation will disclose the real nature—in case the tracks are those of a calf moose there will generally be two of an identical size (the cow moose has twin calves nine times out of ten) and the tracks of the mother will not be far distant.

Now as to the differences in the habits of deer and moose which may have some effect on the tracking art. In the first place it must be recalled that the moose is a very large, conspicuous animal; he is especially noticeable in the winter time when his big black hulk looms up startlingly clear at long ranges. Consequently it sounds reasonable to state that a moose must be far more wary than a deer. To illustrate by a concrete example:

On the last day of the hunting season one year I left the cabin an hour before daylight and by the time it was light enough to "line sights" I was in close proximity to a good deer and moose feeding grounds. I carefully approached a lick which, although frozen by snow, had been visited lately by both deer and moose. I saw no fresh tracks there so started up the sidehill on which the animals were wont to feed from alder, willow and birch. I had gone a few hundred yards when I came across a fresh deer track and following it but a short ways concluded that the animal was nearby, feeding. The tracks so criss-crossed one another I did not dare pay much attention to them for I must be alert for a flash shot. Cautiously I moved about, with that

indescribable feeling that I was being watched all the time.

Then I spotted my deer, so close to me that the most notable feature was its great round eye; every bit of it was perfectly concealed behind heavy trees, but the head. Now, the point I want to bring out is this—that deer had been watching me for several minutes and yet stood its ground until I fired. Because of its color blending with the trees it felt perfectly safe in letting me approach. On the other hand, had that been a moose, it would have departed at the first inkling of my obnoxious presence. As I stated elsewhere in these articles, the moose during breeding or mating season is a bold and curious animal, but I am speaking of their actions during hunting season, later in the fall and early winter.

The buck deer, when walking leisurely along, drags his feet continually while the female makes a dainty, neat track. In tracking the deer one should keep a sharp lookout along open ridges, it is quite a habit with deer to lie down under a tree at somewhat of an elevation where they may command a view of the surroundings.

One may often tell the nature of tracks and their age by examining the droppings of the animal; that of the deer is small, round and black while that of the moose is about the size of the hazelnut and have a similar look. In cool weather the age of tracks may be ascertained by crushing the droppings with the foot or a stick—if they seem soft the animal has not been long gone, but if hard and frozen it will prove conclusively that the creature has left that particular spot some time previously, depending on how cold it is. In the same way one

can tell whether a deer or moose has been "jumped" from his bed recently, during cold weather. If the bed appears hard and frozen you may be sure the animal has left it from some other cause, whereas if it is still soft and yielding to pressure it is more than likely that you have "jumped" your quarry.

Tracks in the snow may be tested with the forefinger—if packed but not unyielding they are not so old; if frozen hard exactly the reverse.

BEAR TRACKS

The illustration of bear tracks gives a good idea of what the whole imprint looks like. However, in most instances, the bear leaves only a portion of the imprint from the forefoot or covers it entirely with the mark from the hind one. I remember an amusing incident relative to bear tracks: My pard and I were going along a sandbar on the Baptiste river one fall. Suddenly he stopped and pointed excitedly to what appeared as an ENORMOUS bear track—it was almost as wide as the two hands would span. I guess that was about the first bear track that lad had ever seen—anyway I soon pointed out his error—there were TEN toemarks to that track instead of FIVE! It was two tracks, so closely blended together, alongside one another, as to resemble one track.

Black bear tracks may be distinguished from those of the grizzly by difference in size, length of claw mark from end of toe and shape of heel. The grizzly's track is much larger, the ends of the claws touch the ground from two to three inches from the end of the toes and the heel is more of a V-shape. A good idea of the difficulty of tracking bears may be obtained

from the information in the chapter under BEAR TRAPPING.

CAT TRACKS

There is very little difference between the tracks made by lynx cats, lynx and cougars or "mountain lions" except in size. None of these tracks show any signs of claw marks under ordinary circumstances, the claws being encased in fur or "sheathed" so to speak. All of these animals walk in the same manner as an ordinary house cat—not in a straight line but somewhat spread apart.

Time without number I have had various parties tell me of seeing timber wolf tracks in places where I had never known them to be—nine times out of ten these misinformed people had seen lynx tracks and because of their size mistook them for wolves. The tracking down of any big "cat" entails something of a combination between an Indian and a bloodhound—the trapper will ordinarily have to leave this to dogs trained for the purpose. My earliest experiences with wild creatures of the "cat tribe" were spent in chasing what we called "Bob Cats" really lynx cats. In the pursuit of these animals I have more than once risked my one and only neck, scaling or trying to scale, precipitous slopes in the rocky canyons along the Columbia river. This country is all brush, except along the larger streams, but the lynx do not have caves in rocks as the lynx cats do down home—this seems due to the formation of the cliffs here, being mostly sandstone and continually crumbling I guess it does not appeal to the animals as a shelter! I can't say that I blame them, either.



MINK



LYNX



FOX



MARTEN



WOLF

BEAVER TRACKS

These may be readily distinguished from those of any other animal by the webbed hind feet; the beaver makes a track something like that left by a big goose. The forefeet leave imprints much smaller in comparison, the long, finger-like claws leave clear impressions, while the toenails on the hind feet are mere stubs. The unmistakable signs of beaver will be found in any location where he happens to be staying for any length of time, although in spring trapping it will be to the trapper's advantage to be able to make out the various landing places.

MUSKRAT TRACKS

The tracks of this little animal somewhat resemble those of the beaver, on a much smaller scale; however, the hind feet are not so fully webbed. The inexperienced tracker is quite apt to mistake the tracks left by a 'rat in the mud, as the signs of some strange bird. One of the most unmistakable ways of telling muskrat tracks, if in mud where they generally are, is to watch for signs of the tail dragging, which it invariably does. I have often marked where a 'rat had been just through noting where his tail had dragged in the mud and where the washing of the water had made all other signs so faint as to be unreadable.

MINK AND WEASEL TRACKS

These tracks resemble one another so closely that an experienced tracker is apt to mistake a very large weasel track for that of a small mink. I

have heard such "bosh" as this—a weasel always puts his left foot forward, in each individual group or pair, and the mink places his right foot in the lead! This is the worst kind of nonsense and no set rule can be applied. The surest way of telling between weasel and mink tracks is to follow them a ways, if they lead into water you know it is a mink. If on particularly high land, some distance away from any stream, you may reasonably assume that the tracks were left by a weasel; the mink is more inclined to stay near water, though in rare cases they will wander across country.

FOX, COYOTE AND WOLF TRACKS

Trappers in general are continually wondering whether a certain track was made by a fox or small wolf. You will note by the illustrations that fox tracks are not quite so distinct, in the matter of toe and toenail marks as those made by the wolf. The fox makes a somewhat neater mark in the snow and rarely drags his feet as the coyote does. The coyote tracks in a straight line, while the fox steps more in the nature of a cat—tracks not so far apart as the wolf, either.

All these animals belong to the DOG FAMILY, so it is quite natural to assume that their habits would closely ally. The tracks of the timber wolf may readily be distinguished from those of lynx or lion, the toenails make a distinct imprint.

FISHER AND MARTEN TRACKS

Marten tracks are placed in the same position as those of the weasel and mink, that is, in pairs with one foot a little ahead of the other. Ordinarily

they will take four or five jumps, placing the right foot foremost, alternating with another similar group where the left foot leads.

Fisher tracks are much larger than those of the marten but generally the pairs of tracks will be closer together—a marten will leap from three to five feet without breaking step but if the fisher attempts anything of this sort he will make scattering groups, much the same as a dog in running. Occasionally the fisher will walk real slow and leave tracks closely resembling the fox. Both the marten and fisher have more heavily furred feet than the majority of animals and rarely do they show any impression of claws. Both marten and fisher have real sharp, cat-like claws and invariably any animal of this class does not show marks of claws.

CHAPTER XV

GRADING AND CARING FOR FUR

SKINNING

THERE are two well-known methods of skinning, "open" and cased. To skin the furbearer "open" cut from the central point of the lower jaw straight down the belly to the vent; down the back of each hind leg to the vent and down the inside of each foreleg to the brisket. This is all the cutting through the hide or fur that is necessary, except around the feet and tail. On some animals, as will be hereinafter described, the feet and tail are skinned right out, on others they are cut off from the rest of the pelt. In skinning open one should do the work as clean as possible, that is, not leaving any more meat and fat on the pelt than can be avoided. To stretch a pelt skinned "open" one will need to tack it on a flat or smooth surface or stretch between the sides of a frame.

SKINNING "CASED"

Cut from the feet down the inside of the hind legs to and around the vent, then peel the skin carefully down as far as it will go, using a sharp knife when necessary. Skin the tail by placing a split stick over the bone, grasping the stick firmly with the right hand so that the stick won't slip off the bone, hold the animal with the left hand and pull steadily. Sometimes it is necessary to split the

tail part way down the under side, thus removing the bone. In all cases the bone should be removed or the tail is apt to spoil, greatly destroying the value of the pelt.

Next peel the skin down over the body and when you get to the front feet draw the skin right off them, splitting a little on the under side above the heel if necessary, and leave the feet attached to the skin. Draw the skin on down off the neck and head, exercising care when skinning around eyes and ears. When taken off the skin will resemble a long pocket, the flesh side being outside of course.

STRETCHING THE "CASED" FUR

Trappers lose large sums every season through improper handling of furs. One of the most necessary acts is to remove all fat and flesh from the pelt side, if not thoroughly cleaned or "fleshed" a fur will lose money for somebody. Even if you do happen to be in a cold climate, where there is no danger of your furs spoiling while in your hands—remember that it must go through a number of processes before finally worn; furs are an article of fashion, more or less, yet the trapper should do his share to make them durable and worth the money paid for them.

The wilderness trapper may often be forced to stretch his valuable furs on crude boards, but with a little work he can fashion first-class stretchers with nothing but an axe and sharp knife. First he should select a straight-grained dry log (pine is very good for this work) and split out rough boards of the desired thickness, shaping them roughly with the axe and doing the finishing process with his

knife. A small plane is a very handy article and the use of one will mark for a much better and smoother stretcher.

Stretchers are made in various ways; the common method calls for either a single or three-piece stretcher. The single piece stretcher is very unsatisfactory in most cases because the pelt, when dry, is very difficult to remove and one is apt to tear the skin. The three-piece stretcher is far more satisfactory; it allows the fur to dry quicker and better, a better job of stretching can be done with it and when dry the pelt can be removed readily without danger of injuring the skin. In case the single piece stretcher is used one should always insert a small flat stick on either side, between the flesh side and the board—this will prevent the fur from sticking to the wood.

It is a somewhat natural tendency for trappers to overstretch their furs. Skins should be stretched fairly tight but not enough to destroy the density or thickness of the fur. I shall endeavor to give the approximate dimensions to which each individual kind of fur should be stretched, but it must suffice only as a general rule—animals vary considerably in size.

CARE OF FOX SKINS

An average fox pelt should be stretched so as to measure 30 inches from nose to base of tail, 6 inches wide at shoulders and $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches at base. The fox has a somewhat tender skin and great care should be used in handling it. I have seen careless fur buyers grab a fox by the nose, give the pelt a vigorous shake and snap part of the tail off. If

you want to shake any kind of fur, so as to bring out the fluffiness, grasp by the nose with the fingers of one hand and at the root of the tail with the other hand, and don't jerk the skin around as though killing snakes!

Be very careful in removing the tail bone of the fox, especially if the carcass has been frozen before reaching the trap. In hanging the skins away it is wise to cut a slight hole in the fur, close to the tip of the tail, so as to allow any grease that accumulates to drain off. Avoid storing skins away where it is either warm or damp, they should be in a cool, airy place, something that is not very easy for the wilderness trapper to provide. On my longer traplines I always aimed to have one cabin with a sort of lean-to, where I kept any furs that I wanted to hold for any length of time.

Grading furs is an art in itself and can only be done in the right manner after years of handling skins. For general purposes it is best to divide skins of furbearing animals into three classes, Nos. 1, 2 and 3. A No. 1 skin should be a good average size, well-furred and in prime condition. A No. 2 may be either a small, well-furred skin or a large one in second-class shape; No. 3 grade should account for all real small skins, abused ones or unprime.

Silver and Cross Foxes are very hard to grade, other things being in proportion. The Silver Fox is generally black on the legs, belly and shoulders, the rump and head being covered with gray-tipped hairs. The Cross is similar except that red spots occur on shoulders, hips or leg; sometimes in all of these places and again maybe only on the shoul-



THREE SILVER FOXES—A LESSON IN GRADING FURS
PHOTO, COURTESY OF J. C. WATERSTREET

ders. The less red on the Cross the more valuable, naturally.

Toward breeding season foxes start rubbing against trees and the like, and often small spots will appear where the fur is absolutely minus. I have seen an otherwise perfect silver fox sell for only a fraction of its usual value just because of a blemish of this sort only an inch or so in width and twice as long.

GRADING WOLF FURS

The same principles as described for caring for fox skins should apply to the handling of the wolf. The wilderness trapper will have but two separate classes, the brush wolf and timber wolf, to distinguish between them. The brush wolf should be stretched so as to measure 50 inches from nose to base of tail, 10 inches wide at shoulders and 12 inches wide across base. Timber wolf 50 per cent larger all around. The tail of the wolf is not nearly so heavy as that of the fox and less trouble will be experienced in handling it. Wolves, if caught after November, are very uniform in size and quality of fur, being one of the easiest animals to grade.

Timber wolves are often quoted as "black" and "gray." The black wolf is closely allied to the Siberian wolf and is not really black but a dark gray. The gray wolf is the ordinary wolf, much the same color as the prairie wolf or coyote. Generally speaking the black wolf is worth at least 25 per cent more than the gray, although in the fur game a great deal depends on fashion.

BEAVER SKINS

Formerly beaver skins were sold by the pound; this was all right in the early days when the traders realized such profits on them and handled a hundred skins to where one is purchased these days. The difficulty in grading beaver skins lies in the great difference in sizes. Beavers are stretched "round" on a flat surface or in a hoop made of pliable wood like alder, birch or willow. In skinning the beaver cut from the point of lower jaw down the belly to the vent and around the tail next to the scaly part. Do NOT cut down either leg, just cut around the feet where the fur leaves off and peel skin clear off. I may say that the beaver is a very hard animal to skin, the pelt should be taken off clean as you go, leaving no fat or flesh adhering to the skin.

A good big beaver skin should stretch almost round and measure nearly three feet across, a medium 30 inches, small 24 inches and kitts 18 inches in diameter.

The wilderness trapper will find the "hoop stretcher" best adapted for taking care of the beaver furs. It is made by tying together two or three flexible switches in the form of a circle slightly bigger than the skin to be stretched in it. The stretching is accomplished by fastening the skin first at each quarter; then with a sacking needle and heavy twine sewing through the edge of the skin and around the hoop each time. Better results may be obtained by using a separate piece of twine for each quarter; tightening or loosening as required to get the desired shape. Be sure that the beaver skins are thoroughly dry and do not keep them near a fire or they will become as hard and stiff as boards.

CARE OF LYNX SKINS

The lynx is skinned "cased" like the fox and it is better to leave the feet on. The skin should be stretched on a three-piece "board" flesh side out until fairly dry; it should then be turned and left with the fur side out. The average length of a lynx skin, from nose to base of tail, is about 40 inches, width at shoulders 8 inches and 10 inches width at base of tail.

The average color of the lynx is mottled gray and is very uniform in the general run of furs; in certain sections, however, lynx are a dark bluish-gray and are called "blue lynx." A curious fact in connection with lynx fur is that the fur underneath (on the animal's belly) is longer and of a finer texture than that on the back. I think this is because of the animal's habit of lying crouched in the snow so often, on the alert for small game. As a rule the fur is somewhat lighter in color underneath.

MARTEN FUR

Next to the grading of the higher priced foxes, I think the marten is the hardest animal to grade. The fur of the marten is very valuable, especially in consideration of its size, and the color varies a great deal in animals that range the same section. As a rule three classes will prove sufficient, they are, **DARK**, **BROWN** and **PALE**. Some buyers classify the marten furs as, dark northern, brown and coast. This is somewhat misleading, as I have caught the three grades in the same locality.

A dark marten will be such a dense shade of deep brown that it is almost black, being only slightly

paler underneath and with an orange patch on throat just ahead of forelegs; soft underfur of drab. The brown marten is much the same color as the ordinary mink and is more common than either of the other grades, except nearer the west coast where pale predominates and the dark marten is very scarce. On both of the last-mentioned grades the fur is somewhat lighter underneath and there is invariably a light-colored patch on the throat.

In this particular locality I have noticed that the darker martens are generally females, hence somewhat smaller than the paler ones. The average size of the marten is identical with that of the average mink of this section: 20 inches to base of tail, 3½ inches wide at shoulders and 4½ inches across base. The trapper will get a fairer valuation of his marten skins by stretching them all as nearly uniform in length as possible, varying the width only. In such small skins an inch or two difference in length is apt to mean ten dollars one way or the other.

FISHER FUR

Fisher are classed along with the marten, yet there are some points, besides size, which should be taken into consideration. For instance, the marten has an almost perfect "fox head" while that of the fisher comes nearer to resembling a cat head; the head of the latter is short and thick and the ears are much shorter in proportion than the marten's.

The general color of the fisher is real dark brown, becoming lighter toward the head where it takes on a grizzled gray appearance. The tail is long and bushy and almost black. I have seen some fisher skins that would closely resemble silver fox

but for the tail; the fisher's tail while quite an "ornament" falls far short of the fox's "brush" and also lacks the beautiful white tip. Fisher furs require a stretcher practically identical with that used for fox; sometimes slightly smaller. A good average will be 30 inches to base of tail, 5 inches wide at shoulders and 7 inches across base.

In grading fisher preference is always accorded the darker skins, and as I remarked under the heading of "Marten Fur" the females are smaller and have the more beautiful coats. The wilderness trapper who is fortunate enough to get a fisher now and again may indeed count himself fortunate; not only are they fairly valuable, as furs go, but they are extremely rare.

OTTER FUR

The fur of this animal is much the same in class as that of the beaver, that is, consisting of two separate coats. The outer coat or "guard hairs" on the otter fur is not nearly so long as that on the beaver but the underfur is a darker drab. Otters do not vary as to color a great deal, in the same section, but some sections have much darker animals than others. It is generally admitted that Labrador furnishes the very best otters, though personally I cannot see why skins from that section should be any better than those nearer the Rocky Mountains in the same latitude.

Otter skins should be stretched fairly long in proportion to the width. Length, exclusive of tail, 40 inches, width at shoulders 6 inches, width at base $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Often a large male will require a board nearly 50 inches long and somewhat wider

than the above dimensions. In all cases the tail, which is broad at the base and tapers to a point, should be split open on the underside and tacked to a separate piece of board, flesh side out.

Otter fur sometimes has a slight curl on the top of the guard hairs which gives a "woolly" appearance to the whole. This is called "singd" and is caused by the heat of the sun drying and curling the fur when the animal comes out of the water. This defect is more noticeable in animals taken shortly after the season opens; otters captured in the spring are almost entirely free from any defect of this kind. As in the case of the beaver, otter furs are much better in spring than in fall. Otters are harder to skin than any other animal; all fat should be carefully removed and the skin dried very slowly or it will become exceedingly hard and stiff.

MISCELLANEOUS FURS

Bears should be skinned open, leaving all feet and claws on, and stretched on a flat surface or between the sides of a pole frame. Green bear hides are very heavy and it is practically always necessary to dry them before they can be transported anywhere. Drying will be greatly facilitated by removing as much fat as possible. A bone scraper, with saw-tooth edge, will help wonderfully.

Muskrats should be stretched on single board stretchers, average 16 inches long, 5 inches at shoulders and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches at base. 'Rats are classed, fall, winter and spring, increasing in value as to order mentioned. A fall 'rat will be thinly furred and the pelt side will invariably show dark streaks and splotches. A fully prime skin is fleshy-pink in

color all over. While not classing myself as an "expert" I think I could tell the month any muskrat was taken in (from November to April) by simply examining the flesh side.

Mink are graded dark, brown and pale; the denseness of the fur or color of the pelt side determining the quality in each class. Single-piece stretchers may be used best by inserting an extra piece in the back to keep from sticking. Size—20 inches to base of tail, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at shoulders and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches across base.

Average length of weasel skins, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches to base of tail, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at shoulders and 2 inches at base.

GETTING FULL VALUE FOR YOUR FURS

Many trappers are disappointed each year in the amount of money realized from the sale of their furs. While there are many honest fur dealers all over the country it is not wise for the trapper to place all his confidence in them; he should know what his fur is worth and hold out for that amount. Too many trappers value their catch far beyond what it is actually worth, consequently, when they are forced to sell they hold bitter feelings toward the buyer and say they have been "stung."

Often, however, trappers who know more about furs than the majority of buyers, lose considerable money by a sudden fluctuation in the market. The wilderness trapper will find it very hard to keep in touch with the outside markets; generally he is forced to hang onto his furs until coming out in late spring, at which time it often happens that there is a big slump in the fur market.

There is but one way to get full value out of your catch: First, trap only prime skins and take the very best care of them. Second, keep as close tab on the market as conditions allow. Third, value your furs fairly according to conditions at time of selling and don't accept less than what they are worth!

CHAPTER XVI

CARING FOR THE TRAPPER'S EQUIPMENT

ASSUMING that wilderness trapping is a profession involving considerable outlay of money and requiring three-fourths of one's time, it sounds reasonable to suggest that the trapper take very good care of his equipment. Some of the most careless men I ever met in my life have been acquaintances of the trapline. I will not say they were the most successful trappers, however. The average wilderness trapper will be a mighty busy man; that does not excuse him for letting a valuable outfit go to ruin through neglect. A very few minutes every day will suffice to keep things in repair.

The trapper should look after his own person first of all; and I have generally found that a man who "keeps himself in repair" will not let his outfit suffer. Above all things KEEP CLEAN, there is no reason under the sun why a trapper shouldn't be just as clean as a bank clerk, and far less susceptible to disease germs. Trapping involves an almost endless amount of wear and tear on clothes; footwear especially. Whenever your moccasin starts to rip repair it some way—it will save you a lot of trouble later on; if your clothes are torn, mend them—"a stitch in time saves more than nine."

Cabins should be kept dry or there is very little hope of keeping anything inside them safe from

the elements. If leaving a cabin for any length of time it is wise to hang blankets and the like from wires, so that mice cannot get at them. Foodstuffs should be kept in tins or hung up, for the same reason. In some parts of the wilds Mountain or "pack" Rats are a perfect nuisance, making nests in blankets and packing away small objects, such as knives, forks and spoons; these pests may be done away with by seeing that a No. 1 trap is left in the right place. I was raised in a country where rattlesnakes were very plentiful and anyone who knows the western states is aware of the fact that "rattlers" and "rats" go hand in glove, so to speak. Time and again I have lived in houses over rattlesnake haunts but I will say frankly that an ordinary rat can send more chills up and down my spine than a half dozen rattlesnakes! Incidentally, there are no snakes of any kind in this north country—too cold, I guess.

CARE OF STEEL TRAPS

The wilderness outfit will contain from one to three hundred steel traps, of various sizes and makes; they will last for years if accorded a little attention now and again. In the first place traps should be selected with care; waiting until one gets in the wilderness before testing spring and triggers is a very poor policy. Never set a trap that you are not satisfied with—if you think it may not hold the furbearer it is supposed to, discard it! The cheaper grade of traps sometimes have very poor chains and the jaws are often apt to spring from their position in the posts.

LIBRARY

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I once lost a fine marten through a weakness in a trap spring; naturally this taught me a good lesson. Sometimes the trapper is apt to strike a chain with an axe and it will break readily in cold weather. A glance, now and again, when setting or resetting traps, will suffice to avert any calamity of the above nature. Furbearers are scarce enough without allowing them to escape through carelessness. The smaller traps should be greased occasionally—not with manufactured oils but natural stuff such as bear grease, beaver or skunk oil. This is all the treating that traps require.

When the time comes for taking up traps at the close of the season they should all be hung up or cached in a dry place. If trapping in the wilderness it is generally safe to hang your traps right near where they have been set for they will be mighty handy another fall. Do not place your traps on the ground unless you are absolutely certain they will not get damp; if hung up, rain, sleet, or snow will not affect them for they will quickly dry in the air. For the same reasons traps should not be left in a damp cabin.

CARING FOR FIREARMS

The trapper's firearms are subject to more genuine abuse than ones used in a world war; this is due to the extreme change of temperature in the trapper's country. I carried an expensive rifle for six years on the trapline and must say that I had to keep constantly cleaning and polishing that weapon in order to preserve its usefulness. In selecting a rifle for the wilds the average trapper will buy a 30-30 carbine and let it go at that. As



RAFTING THE ATHABASKA

I said elsewhere, I do not consider the 30-30 quite large enough for moose and grizzly so prefer the .30 Government 1906. The .30 calibre is much easier kept clean than smaller bores, such as the .250 or similar, and that makes a big difference in the bush, believe me.

I have been laughed at, time and again, because of paying so much attention to my firearms, but nevertheless it pays! I remember once, while staying at a friend's, I went deer hunting. It was "below-zero" weather and when I returned, although I had not fired a shot, I started to clean my rifle and oil it inside and out. "Why do you do that?" my friend inquired, so I explained.

When you take a rifle from a warm house out into the cold, a film of frost covers it inside and out. On returning the rifle to its warm quarters, even though it has not been fired, this film turns into water and if not wiped off will certainly rust the weapon. That one thing is accountable for thousands of good rifles going to ruin in the bush. Hundreds of trappers never clean their firearms except after firing; it will be readily understood what a mistake this is. If you are stopping over night, or even for a short time at a cabin where you cannot clean your rifle, do not take it inside—the frost will have no effect on it as long as not allowed to thaw.

Every trapper should have in his equipment a good cleaning rod (preferably one with swiveled joint which allows cleaner to follow twist or rifling), a pull-through with brass brush attachment, good grade of gun oil and some nitro-solvent. The judicious use of these articles will leave your firearms in first-class shape. Avoid using the brass brush more

than is absolutely necessary, a little "elbow grease" in its place, when applied to the business end of a good cleaning rod will make your rifle last longer.

SNOWSHOES AND THEIR CARE

For several months each season the wilderness trapper must wear snowshoes; the "webs" are as much important as anything in the entire equipment. A mighty poor pair of snowshoes will not last long if not properly cared for and after the first few trips are constantly needing attention. Various kinds and shape of snowshoes are in use—conditions are not the same in any two places and the particular kind one needs will depend on these conditions. A safe rule is not to buy your snowshoes until you know what the natives use; for general purposes a snowshoe about twelve inches wide and fifty inches long, including tail, will be about right. Personally, I prefer two sizes, a small and large pair. For breaking fresh trails, the larger pair comes in better, but the smaller ones are mighty handy where much traveling is done over trails previously made.

It is not my purpose to go into the manufacturing of snowshoes—it is a mighty tedious job, and while I have made several pairs I know that the average white man can spend his time to a much better advantage than in making snowshoes. Indians are experts at this job and will do the work very reasonably. I have found most of the manufactured snowshoes quite satisfactory. The greatest trouble with snowshoes lies in their tendency to sag and stretch under the foot, this is more noticeable in wet weather or when the snow is sticky and damp.

The trapper should carry a few strings of rawhide, made from moose or deer, and each night go over his snowshoes and repair any breaks. Do not dry the webs too near the fire as this makes the lacing hard and brittle, causing it to break under the strain. Various manufacturers advertise their wares as "sagless"; they may be for a certain time or under certain usage, but I would certainly like to see a "sagless snowshoe" after a trapper had used it for three or four months! If you leave your snowshoes in a cabin be mighty sure they are hung up by small wire or the mice will get to them and gnaw at the filling.

CARE OF MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

If using dogs the wilderness trapper must mend his harness whenever it needs it, keep pack sacks and toboggans in repair, to say nothing of attention the faithful animals themselves require. Harnesses must be hung up away from mice when the sleighing is over with and toboggan placed where it will not be exposed to the elements. Stretchers should be piled neatly together, cooking utensils taken care of, axes and any other tools stored away and everything left in first class shape. One of the last things the trapper should do, preparatory to leaving his cabin for the summer months, is to take down the camp stoves and cover the holes in the roofs. I would far sooner leave my camp stove clear outside than in its position with the pipe still sticking through the roof! If anything of that nature gets wet inside of a cabin it has no chance to dry, while if left outside would quickly do so after the worst rainstorm.



PACKING OUT THE FUR E. NOBLE AND THE AUTHORS' PACK DOGS

CONCLUSION

Just what the trapper benefits from a winter's expedition into the wilds will depend altogether on himself and his choice of location. Naturally, one cannot catch furs where there are none—at the same time there is a great deal of joy in spending a winter with nature, outside of the actual cash result. The trapper will find more or less time that weighs heavily on his mind, especially if trapping alone. Just how to occupy that time is something of a puzzle. Some men do not care for reading while others would be content almost anywhere as long as they had books and magazines. Personally I derive great pleasure from reading on the trap-line and have whiled many a lonely hour away in this fashion.

A great amount of enjoyment attends the use of the camera, especially if the trapper is inclined to develop and print his own films. I have known a large number of trappers to use the camera, simply as a means of recording their own doings, and some of them did their own developing and printing. A fairly good camera and developing and printing outfit may be purchased most reasonably and I, for one, would never go into the wilds without some sort of an outfit. If the trapper cares to go into the professional side of photographing I can say from experience that he has an opportunity to study nature that few men can enjoy; photos of rare scenes, wild life and the like find a ready market at very fair prices.

Frankly, I will say that I am in the process of turning from a professional trapper into a natur-

alist, and the years I have spent as a trapper have given me knowledge that I could not have gained otherwise. In order to successfully trap the various wild animals one must become a very close student of their habits—the trapper is constantly discovering things, never before set down in natural history.

In close connection with the use of the camera one may place the notebook and diary. I have found it very helpful, as a trapper, to make note of certain actions of wild animals or of other observations; as a nature student one will find the notebook indispensable. The diary is mighty useful, as I remarked before, in recording weather conditions and the like.

Nothing gives me more pleasure than to read over some of my old diary. Under date of Jan. 1, 1920, I have the following, "Spent a quiet New Year's at Rapelje's. Fix sleigh for dogs. Not so cold today." Jan. 2. Leave for No. 1 cabin, hard snowshoeing and have to break fresh trail. Two martens and 4 weasels this trip. Jan. 3. Go up Lynx Creek and down Medicine Lodge Trail to where I killed moose. No luck. Colder again. Jan. 4. Up Lynx Creek to No. 2 cabin. One weasel. Jan. 5. Back to No. 1 over mountain trail. One weasel. See two bull moose fighting in muskeg."

Now those few words are practically meaningless to the reader and difficult to imagine just what comes up in my mind as I read such extracts from my diary. To me these few words are keys that open up the magic door to the past, and I live again the happy days on the trapline, nor is there any bitterness in such remembrance—I think of only

the bright side of things for life is too short to recall the bitterness of disappointment.

Today I am a poor man as far as worldly wealth is concerned, but I am rich in memory. If any of my readers do tackle the wilderness trapping game, I hope fortune is kind to them.

THE END



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